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Australia's Monthly Magazine of the Performing Arts

FEBRUARY 1982

THEATRE

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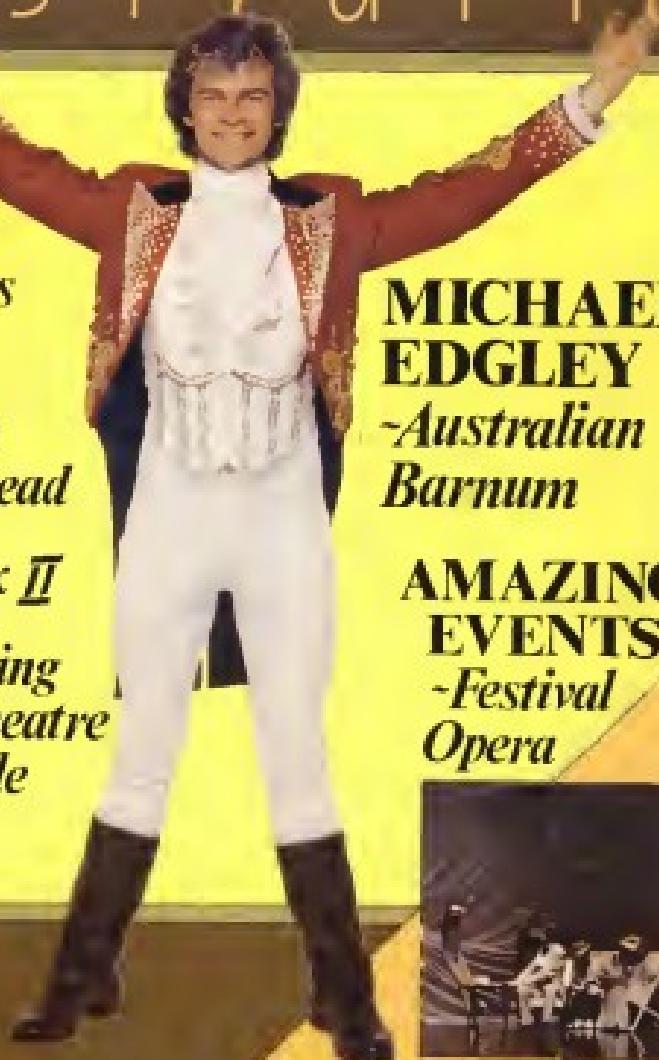
A U S T R A L I A

New Plays
for '82

*Sharman
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Mad Max II

*Exhilarating
Dance Theatre
in Adelaide*



**MICHAEL
EDGLEY**
*-Australian
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**AMAZING
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*-Festival
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Death in
Venice — 1980



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NEW ADDITIONS



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COMMENT

Arts Lobby Success

The success around by the Government's grantings the Australia Council an extra \$809,000 to disburs gave everyone in the subsidised arts world happier Christmas. The change came as a response to lobbying, superbly orchestrated by the Confederation of Australian Professional Performing Arts (CAPPA), a delegation of actors and writers, and the behind the scenes pressure of the new Australia Council Chairman, Dr Timothy Paseo. The Theatre Cross Day — the most volatile and public demonstration of arts critics — served better as a focus and to galvanise the efforts of theatre companies than as an effective force in itself.

It seems that far from wanting to do the arts down, the Government just did not appreciate the particular effects of its actions. As a whole block — in including money to film, the National Gallery etc — the slice of the budget in the arts has kept pace with inflation — an increase from \$40 to \$60 million as a block in the Fraser period. But within that the Australia Council's portion has dropped from 54% to 35%.

Ironically, the Council itself has been a clogged channel for subsidy. Seen in the past as unreliable, torn by internal strife and too fat in terms of its running costs, it was thought that any increase in arts money fed through it would only increase the problem. Timothy Paseo views the supplementary funds not just as a triumph for the arts world, but a coup for the Council, endorsing its decisions, policies and restoring its standing in

the Government's eyes. To maintain and consolidate this newfound favour, he is putting through a major reorganisation of the Council's hierarchy, working to trim down the administrative structure, and is attempting to rebuild the role of private advice ("that means you can't be public critic *l'en*"), involving politicians in the detailed policies and planning for arts funding.

Whilst everyone is delighted by Home Affairs Minister Ian Wilson's statement on the supplementary funding, the news release unfortunately suggests that additional funds "will enable the Australia Council to fully restore funding to all arts organisations whose funding is cut out". In fact for the Theatre Board, the total needed to restore the eight companies cut completely was \$336,000 where for 1982 they have in fact received only an extra \$193,000. Embarrassingly, the release adds "unless it judges on artistic grounds (it should not do so)" (ie sector funding). Theatre companies faced with only partial restoration of funds at the Board's February meeting may feel they have been found wanting on artistic grounds when the real reason remains one of lack of money.

1982 promises a challenging year for the arts. The Council's move to take up one of its major responsibilities as advocate to the Government for the arts, and CAPPA's proven effectiveness in galvanising and orchestrating the arts lobby are positive signs. Certainly it has been brought home to the Cabinet that it has to look more carefully and particularly at its funding for the arts.

INFO

TRUST'S OZ CONTENT

For 1982 the Australian Theatre Trust seems to be doing a 50% up-in-funds, but it turns out that though its money has been reduced from the \$288,000 of 1981 the outcome is nothing like so staggering. It has received a base amount of \$114,000, well below its \$260,000 Challenge Grant release with the potential to have \$20,000 more on the trust for one basis and has an amount of \$40,000 specifically earmarked for Australian content.

General Manager Jeffery Jayson-Smith, welcomes the new subsidy. "Up till now we have had to push the commercial product so that somewhere along the line we could present Australian material. Now the two-fold-as-the-box office part has been removed." That major commitment in 1982 are *Soldier Boys Royal*, Ballet Society Miner Beware then what Jayson-Smith fondly terms "Anthony's Choice", namely Paul Banch's *Wappello* (Dance Theatre) and the Piccolo Teatro of Milan, and thirdly a now assured strong Australian commitment.



Andrew Steel

Anatole Bertram, Anthony Steel has solid hopes for what with a little imagination can be done. "We will be spreading it [funds] in an attempt at the end of the year to show we have done a lot with a little and used the money intelligently and wisely. It is almost more important for the Trust's future than its direct output in 1982."

When the less chalked up an Australian Boxes was \$180,000, the whole \$80,000 could easily go on one production — a Sydney season of the ADT, for instance. Spreading it fairly, though, would allow

the Trust's name to be associated with a wide range of activity. So far, five companies have not gone beyond a small involvement in the Human Voice Sydney showing, but they might consider bringing *Spores* in a small NSW venue and those could easily have had a Melbourne airing if Mel Gibson had been available. Equally, though, smaller ventures could be moved between state capitals away from the Sydney/Melbourne axis. Now is the time for groups to bombard the Trust with suggestions.

Interestingly, in the face of recent bouts of ethnic泰山, leading some surprising names have been put together which reveal that despite the general view of mature overseas content, the ATTF's record of Australian involvement for the four years 1977-80 has been considerable. Excluding two fully imported shows, the Old Vic from London and the Acting Company from New York, there were 19 productions, only seven of which had substantial overseas content. No less than 14 were directed by Australians. The proportion of actors in each show, 126 out of 331 were locals, with the 11 "others" being involved in only 17 of a total of 134 performances. Playwrights based here with only four of the shows being locally written. The \$50,000 special allocation will go some way to redressing this in 1982.

KEMP'S DREAM

Lindsay Kemp, who mesmerised, entranced and occasionally enraged Australia in the '70s with his production of *Flowers* — based on Gertie's *The Last of the Flowers* — is back in the country once more.

He started his national tour in Brisbane last month, proceeds to Melbourne and then Sydney this month and Adelaide and Newcastle in March. As well as *Flowers* the company are also performing Kemp's new creation, *The Dream*, based on A Midsummer Night's Dream with Lindsay Kemp playing Puck. The company received a commission in 1978 from the Teatro Elenco di Roma and the Teatro Nazionale di Milano to mount a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and they put this together during its Italian tour of *Flowers*. Presented in Rome that October it was successful from the start and has been steadily refined and expanded ever since.

"What I want to do with the theatre is to restore the glamour of the Folies Bergères, the danger of the coast, the excitement of rock'n'roll and the sheer of death," says Lindsay Kemp.

AWARD TO SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

Four years on and the Sydney Critics Circle Award for "significant contribution to theatre" is still currently the only award given to members of the theatrical profession.



Richard Blackford

This year's went to the Sydney Theatre Company, selected from an opening list of Nathan John Bell, Nick Freight, Rodney Fisher, Harry Orr, Brian Thompson, and the STC.

NEW MOON OVER QLD

Australia's only professional touring drama company opened its Canva on January 27. The Central and Northern Queensland Theatre Company is now, more hopefully, known as New Moon Theatre Company.

In its first season opened with Reg Livermore and Patrick Flynn's *Not Kelly* — the electric music show first staged in Adelaide in 1977 — directed by Terry O'Connell and designed by David Bell. Each production plays Canva Civic Centre, Townsville Civic Theatre, Mackay Theatre Royal and Rockhampton Pilkington Theatre. After June the company intends to expand its touring effort to more exotic districts.

Recent productions are Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (director Peter Buckley, designer David Bell), the Australian premiere of *No*



Peter Bartley, Paul Ibbotson and Terry O'Connell — New Moon Photo: David Stoen

Orpheus for After Blasted by Chekhov's widow Robert (David MacLennan) [adapted from the thriller by James Hadley Chase and directed by Terry O'Connell with designer Anthony Babcock] and the Australian premiere of the rock opera *Tenace* by Pete Townshend and The Who (director Peter Bartley, designer Anthony Babcock).

New Moon has a medium ensemble of seven: Robert Arthur, Valerie Badde, Bob Barnes, Stephen Clark, Debra Max, Margaret Moore, Wayne Pignat, Kris Rajah, John Roth, David Smithfield and Joe Spence. Michael Elkan is lighting designer, Aku Kadogo is movement director and Ross Brewer is sound designer. Peter Bartley and Terry O'Connell are New Moon's Artistic Directors and Paul Ibbotson as General and STC Adelaide General Manager.

The company has received commercial sponsorship from The Shell Company of Australia Ltd, MIM Holdings Ltd and BHP. The Theatre Board grant is \$79,000. Queensland Government contribution \$70,000 and there are two office grants from the City and State councils totalling \$115,000.

Theatre Company is meeting the challenge of a 20% drop in income with an extremely aggressive policy. Apart from a reduction in their Tangent season (and three plays in two days) seems to confirm that the board sees that alternative ways of the kind that must not be seen to pay the day! the company under Alan Edwards has survived all its trials to meet the storm and in a policy of which President Roosevelt in their recent bid, *Away right*, has approved opted for increased employment and greater output. A high profile programme of plays for 1982, a large proportion of which require ensemble casts and high production costs, is being matched by a commitment to up the already formidable subscriber list and other attempts at paving the way, such as writing the local business dictionary with a scheme of seat sponsorship.

The year kicks off with *Wells Bothy* continuing the practice of beginning with a musical that will get the subscribers into the spirit. A considerable step has been taken however in having Shirley Bradley, a Brisbane professor of enormous musical comedy talent, from the local theatre restaurant circuit to play the lead. Many believed that she was the national choice for the lead in *Ginger*, two years ago, which instead went to a soap queen with disastrous results that are now part of QTC folklore.

Next comes O'Neill's masterpiece, *A Long Day's Journey into Night* which even if it is pared down from its original five

hours, is a bold and exciting choice, the QTC had a great success with their last O'Neill, Robert Lowry's 1980 production of *Maurice Bejart's Phoenix*. There are two recent Australian pieces, Upton's *The Winkies* and the more remarkable *Kespos*, by Ron Elska, plus a third, *Aladdin*, November 1st, mostly to crypto-until late in the year, followed by Williamson's *The Peculiarities*. Edwards is Elspeth's eighth warm-hearted comedy of dancin' girls and celebration. Several *Sands* (Monian) should prove popular, as should Shelly's *Admiral*, though I must assume that the revised version is being well-hedged given the QTC's notoriously nervous board gate. Still, as it were, of the play's catalogued needs, I'm sure they would never have given it the nod of approval.

The horses stand mounted off by The *Tempter*, an open air production for the Commonwealth Games Festival '82 and for which previous Shakespeare in the park have been trial runs. There may be ungrammaticated women in performing a play dealing with the theme of colonial domination in the make of what may turn out to be a volatile inter-scene, certainly if the Hon Ross Hinch's punctuation is anything to go by. All the same, one wonders how many Shakespeares will be around to see the production and how many will have fled the interests and headed for the coast.

The QTC have again chosen to appear not an associate designer but an associate with limited responsibility: Greg Gisch; an

QTC IN '82

An excellent theatre company, faced with massive Federal funding cuts, look for artes on which to cast, the Queensland

actor with the company in minor roles for some time, follows Peter Duncan in this position. With fairly limited directorial experience, he will be responsible for *The Harbour* and one of the *Tangent* shows. The other is in the hands of Duncan Wiles, an actor of experience and standing with the company and one of the few to be on a twelve-month contract this year.

THEATRE ACT IN CANBERRA

George Whateley has renamed Canberra's Fortune Theatre, and announced a series of productions. First for the new Theatre ACT will be Whateley's own adaptation of *Steek Rudd's On Our Selection*, with Michael Boddy as Dad and John Derrin as Dave. It opens at the Playhouse theatre, and will be followed immediately by Ron Elska's *Scrooge*.

After an Anzac Day special at the War Memorial, the company will present a large-scale children's show at the Canberra Theatre, and will finish the year with another double season at the Playhouse. Whateley hopes to resolve Des Astor's Human Voice drama company in a small-scale adaptation of *Pierrot le Fou*, to be given

in conjunction with *Banjo on Ice*. Some lunch-time plays are also likely.

Whateley's auction classes, held during November and December, attracted 55 hopefuls, ten or eight of whom will work with Theatre ACT in 1982.

EINSTEIN IN SYDNEY

Frederick Pandor, one of Australia's most acclaimed actors will be coming to Sydney to perform in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of Ron Elska's highly acclaimed play, *Einstein*.

Pandor is well known to Melbourne though not to Sydney audiences. His performance in *Einstein* earned him best performance of the year from *Age* theatre critic, Leonard Raby, and he has just completed a successful season in the MTC production of *Anastasia*, playing Salomon, the arch rival of Mousa, in Peter Shaffer's multi-award winning play.

In the play *Einstein*, the great scientist is facing imminent death. He is confronted by the changing patterns of his life — by narrow images of his exuberant, dedicated youth and his much honored, August middle age. His great intellectual fears, that are accompanied by failures in personal

relationships, and his mounting flashes of discovery, that are followed by years of false directions and disappointments, puzzle for his attention.

Einstein has 4 cast of three. Frederick Pandor who plays Einstein aged 76 years, Garry Dwyer plays Einstein aged from 40 to 65 years, and Roger Chalkley who plays Einstein from 36 to 40 years. The play is directed by Bruce Miles and designed by Richard Price. It starts at the York Theatre, Seymour Centre, on February 4.

CHANGES... .

Stephen Barry resigned from the National Theatre, Perth during December last year and will be returning to England to take up a position there. John Little, Marketing and Promotions Manager at the AETT for the last seven years, has left the Trust to set up in business on his own. He will still be retained by the Trust, though as Marketing and Promotions Consultant and his new company will be the Trust's official advertising agency. Soon after George Whateley left NIDA to head the Fortune Theatre Company in Canberra, Ian Cadekay, Head of Production at NIDA, left to rejoin the technical staff in the MTC and Peter Connolly, who has taught history

1981 Pandor as Einstein



of hours and directed plays at NIDA for the past seven years, has rejoined the profession as a distance actor/director, and lectures on theatre. **Tony Barday** has become NIDA's new Dramaturg. **Hannah Allen**, previously Publicity Officer at La Boite, has moved on to become Community Arts Officer for greater Brisbane and **John Stawell** has taken her place at La Boite.



Peter Corcoran

CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE CENTRE

A disconsolate church in Hawthorn one of Melbourne's gentler suburbs, houses the Contemporary Performance Centre, Melbourne's newest, and in the parlance of restaurateurs, most ambient venue, with its high vaulted ceiling of polished pine, resonant wooden floors, warded glass windows overlooking a massive gallery. The proportions are generous and the atmosphere soft. It looks full with a hundred people but can seat up to four hundred.

Established and administered by the RMIT Drama Department, it is the brain child of an Artistic Director, John Ellis, who said that "The programme will be developed gradually with the emphasis on a relatively small number of projects operating under specific conditions, including the opportunity to workshop and rehearse in the space, and will variously involve professional companies, educators and talented students. These projects will include intensive experimental workshops, ongoing research and innovative productions."

Like the MII Theatre in Geelong, the Contemporary Performance Centre affirms the strength and aesthetic integrity of unaffiliated theatre spaces. It is ideally suited to its fast demands, productions that take space seriously and we can look forward to discussions and dialogues rising to the challenge and inspiration it offers.



Contemporary Performance Centre Photo: Graham Park

ANOTHER NEW COMPANY IN WA

With three or four new theatre companies springing up in Perth during 1981 — and not all surviving to tell the tale — the Swan River Stage Company seems to be aiming out on quite a different task. Its principal objective is to develop, through workshops, new plays using WA talent.

The company's first season is composed of two plays — *The Dreamers* by Aboriginal writer Mick Davis, a detailed portrait of urban Aboriginal life and beyond that about dreams, death and the survival of the individual and the community. The second is a children's play, with songs by Valerie Lusby for the Festival of Perth/Mount Lawley Children's Festival of Performing Arts called *Max and Milly*.

SHAKESPEARE STUDY TOUR

There there usually avoider turns to a succession of famous theatres — "If this is Thursday, it must be La Scala" — with performances thrown in. The Shakespeare Study Tour is entirely different. Its object is to study the plays in performance and it is designed for those who want to do more than just sit and watch them. The group will see performances by the Royal Shakespeare Company in London and Stratford, but that is just the start of the process. There will be lectures on the plays and post-performance seminars conducted by leading scholars and critics, sessions in which the group can talk with the practitioners about their work, backstage visits and workshop sessions in which the

group will explore the plays from the inside. As well as all this, there will be excursions to historical sites associated with the plays and access to one of the world's best Shakespeare stage history collections.

The tour is organised by the Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney in conjunction with the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Birmingham. The cost of \$2,900 includes all fares, three-star accommodation with breakfast, all tuition, excursions and theatre tickets. Further information is available from Ms D Dakin, Adult Education, University of Sydney, 933 2847.



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POPOVIAN MOVIES

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After Burnin, the next big American musical we may see is *42nd Street*, the smash-hit extravaganza glorifying the songs from bygone, bigtime Broadway and Hollywood musicals. It opened at New York's 1,623-seat Majestic Theatre in August, 1980, and is still booked out six months ahead, with a \$1.56 million advance, as it nears its 60th performance.

Helen Montagu, Australian-born London and New York-based entrepreneur, was here in December stringing up Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide's theatres capable of staging this big show and also with auditorium large enough to be economic. So such a costly production looks like Her Majesty's for Sydney and the Palace for Melbourne, with late this year or early next the date.

I understand this will be the first, and probably the only independent production outside America permitted by US producer David Merrick, who has a profound respect for Australian shows — knowhow elsewhere, Merrick will probably insist on staging the show himself! It's of interest that his own number two company does not open till next December, in Chicago.

Helen Montagu also now has Robyn Archer under her wing and will present a revised and retitled version of *A Star Is Born* in May. She says Robyn scored in London last year by not proclaiming herself a star, as another Australian contender did, but opening modestly in a small venue and leaving it to the critics themselves to "discover" her talents.

Good news for MLC Theatre Royal Company director Frederick Gibson was that Mark Medoff's *Children of a*

Lesser God, which he will stage here this year, was chosen as the best play of the 1980-81 light season by the Society of West End Theatres. That drama about the love of a speech therapist and his deaf mute pupil, which also collected best acting awards for its two stars, Trevor Eve and Elizabeth Quinn, beat a field that included Peter Nichols' *Fusion Play*, Brian Friel's *Translations* and Simon Gray's *Quarempire's Terms*.

The new Andrew Lloyd Webber concoction, *Cats*, was selected as the best musical, starring Barbra, *Our Mo' Town* and *New Little Whorehouse*.

On Broadway, as here, there appears to be investment money available for musicals, but very little for drama and serious theatregoers must look to Off and Off-Off Broadway for more substantial fare. Fortunately for them, the scene there this season is reportedly one of outstanding theater of expressive stage and source, the offerings including American, British, Chinese-American and Americanised Japanese.

Want No Australian? So it seems, which is a pity, considering the wealth of local material available. For example, most of the rare one-acters staged jointly by the King Of Malley and Sidney Theatre companies last year were well worthy of wider audiences than those that jam-packed the Sydney Studio Theatre every night. Here, maybe, a fresh scope for the World Theatre Exchange. Many of the



Ruth Cracknell — Christmas at London

new US pieces, to judge by the reviews, would do well here.

As Australian Opera tickets get dearer and dearer, the New York City Opera has reduced its prices by 20 percent for its season opening at the New York State Theatre on February 26. Some stall seats will be as low as \$12 and the gallery \$4. The move follows a 1980 boost in a top price of \$25 which increased the dollar intake,



New York production of *Children of a Lesser God* — the play accepted the awards in London

but cut subscriptions from 67 percent of capacity to 30 percent.

In contrast, the Met Opera next does it still averaging a 537 top and holding subscribers to a 60 percent capacity.

On the home front, however, opera remains most popular of the performing arts at Sydney Opera House. Annual report statistics show that 133 performances drew 146,975 patrons for an average 91 percent capacity. Ballet's 127 performances had 146,544 patrons for 90 percent and drama brought 143,072 to 383 performances for an average 75 percent capacity. For films, 1027 screenings attracted only 84,386 viewers, an average 24 percent of capacity.

At a recent opening at the National Drama Studio, a manager asked the audience to "squeeze up a bit" because he said, it appeared they were going to have "a very full house." Then one watching Albrecht has so many seats and when they are occupied it is a "full house." Management should sell no more tickets than these are seats, allowing always for the bringing in of extra chairs and the use of spare space on stairways. I know every theatre needs every seat and



Ruthie Hensel — Corinne Léandre

there is nothing more satisfying than being part of a capacity audience. But please, in the name of reasonable safety and comfort, never a "very full house."

41 Min

*When *The Fantasticks* opened on May 3, 1960, book and lyric writer Tom Jones hoped for 100 performances, composer Harvey Schmidt that it would run through the weekend. At New York's Sullivan Street Theatre on December 20 it notched up its 900th performance.

*A light adaptation of New York author Helene Hanff's delightful book *8½ Chang Crox Road* opened in London to warm plaudits from most critics.

*Actress Judi Dench, who died last August aged 74, left a portrait and bust of herself to London's Tate Gallery and her wardrobe to the National Theatre.

*London revival of *Sound of Music*, in turns playing to a standing-room-only 101 percent capacity, is selling tickets for June and beyond.

*Barb Cratchell spent Christmas in London as a house guest of actress Helen Mirren.

*When the musical *Candide*, which the Musical now plans to present, was first staged many years ago, J C Williamson's, then in its heyday, rejected it as too permissive for Australian audiences.



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The World of Harlequin



John's Harlequin - left, Collezione from the Piccolo Teatro di Milano

The Festival of Perth and the AETT are bringing to Australia for the first time Italy's most famous theatre company, Piccolo Teatro di Milano—formed in 1947 to preserve and develop the great Italian tradition of the commedia dell'arte.

The production, *Harlequin and the Others*, is dedicated to the history and world of masks, so in that extraordinary chapter in the history of Italian theatre that began somewhere in the Middle Ages, and had its heyday between the 16th and 18th centuries.

It created and confirmed, with unsurpassable critical and expressive bite, the fundamental types of the Italian society of the time, making them the protagonists of an endless series of picturesque and significant adventures, the characters of a universe that reflected the opinions, moral codes, hopes, fears and problems of the real world.

Harlequin (or more correctly Arlecchino) is the pivot of the Commedia characters. He is the poor servant, always hungry, who cannot but live on a day-to-day basis, naive as a result of his lacking any prospects, made acute by necessity, lively and frank in self-defence, a precursor to satisfy the market demand, a thief in order to get justice.

The others, then, are "the others": the despotic master to the wily, threatening soldier and the doctor who intimidates him through his use of Latin quotations; these characters represent the social powers and classes in whose hands the people were but a passive instrument.

The play is a collection of cues and texts from various epochs, famous jokes, extracts from stories which figure in the history of the Milan Piccolo Teatro, touches the ever-lasting *Servizio à due padroni* (The servant of two masters). It tells the story of the

embalmed character from his origin, confused with that of other servants, to the full celebration of his peculiar personality, achieved finally through the anonymous dramatic appropriations of the early commedia troupes and, subsequently, through Carlo Goldoni's scripts.

This production has the man regarded as the greatest Harlequin of this century, Ferruccio Soleri, leading the group of actors from Icarni Piccolo. He trained at the National Academy of Dramatic Art in Rome, researching texts, plays of the time and the making of the masks themselves, but, he says, "Arlecchino was for me still a mask without a face until 1959 when I saw for the first time Arlecchino played by Marcello Mazzini in an unforgettable performance. For me it was a revelation. On stage Arlecchino had lost the stereotyped and conventional character of the mask and gained immensely in human terms — flexible, peasant-like, naive, an authentic and popular character."

"My Arlecchino slowly took shape like a living person, absorbed into the society in which I live in and where Arlecchino can represent, both on the psychological and emotional level, not so much a model as the human variability. This is why I think my Arlecchino, that is based in art and carried entirely from the great 'human' portrayal by Mazzini, has become 'human,' — the image of a man fighting in two worlds with all the contradictions, crusing, and middle-classes men."

But do we get to see the direct exponents of a major theatrical form, such as commedia, in Australia? Its impact has been enormous all down the centuries, but with the present concern with skills and action, as against word, commedia's influence is unimpaired and in its pure form remains enthralling, enlightening and engrossing theatre.

Soleri will be appearing with the Piccolo Teatro di Milano at the Perth Festival from February 24 to March 8. The company will then perform at the Canberra Theatre, Canberra, from March 9 to 13. A special extended season has been arranged for Sydney by the Elizabethtown Theatre Trust and the Perth Festival and will be held at the Seymour Centre from March 19 to 27.

Theatre Australia Special Feature- NEW WRITING IN 1982

BARRY DICKINS *Alsation Mimic and Playwright*



By Suzanne Spenser

Barry Dickins was born in Rosebud, and for a time he lived in Cawdon when it was still cheap. In recent years he's lived in St Kilda near the laughing jaws of Luna Park and now in a decaying block of flats in Prahran. On his letterbox there's a padlock and an engraved and embossed aluminium name plate which reads, "Ahabon Mambo-Len H. Dinn lives here".

On the door of his flat there's a drawing of a long-necked clay and beneath it, "Home of Barry Dickins, opening bar for 'The Dead'". Inside there's a large colour TV set (courtesy of four attacks for *The Herald*), a mangy koala bear, two large framed photographs of Mo, and a collection of presumably significant books — *The Horse's Mouth*, *Pritchard Papers*, *Stigmaria & The Myth of Sisyphus*,

The Heart of Darkness and very little else.

We drink beer and mineral water from red and yellow spotted tumblers which Barry produced from his green plastic shopping bag, and he called Dickens always looks poor, on good days he just looks less poor, almost always he's just getting over something or just coming down with something. He has no teeth and the rest of his pants is always shiny, if it's there at all. He's rarely happy, almost invariably paranoid, and even when he tells you his woes, as he always does, he makes you laugh. And, no matter what, he writes. In Melbourne there is no writer more prolific, except perhaps Roger Palmer, whom Dickens not surprisingly regards as his shadow.

Barry Dickins has written more than 14 plays since his first, *Giant*, was staged at La Mama in 1974. His latest, *The Sabbath of Lesser Love*, opens this month at The Playbox.

In 1978 his *Fish Slab Hotel* shared the APG Playwrights Competition with Stephen Sewell's *Towers*. In 1979, he received a 12-month Literature Board Fellowship, and since then he has been writer-in-residence at La Mama, the Victorian College of the Arts and in January this year he became Playwright-in-residence at The Playbox. Last year his plays, *The Death of Moene* and *The Boomer Bender* were published in the Theatre Australia New Writing series by Currency Press.

He is a regular newspaper columnist and cartoonist and at present has comic strips and cartoons in *The Age*, *The Herald*, *The Review* and *The Melbourne Times* and is about to appear in *Fogar*. He contributes fanatical book reviews to *JAR*, to wit, "Mansingo at Mern Creek", "The History of Preston" by Manning Clarke, and last year his autobiography, *The Gift Of The Gab* was published. He also writes poetry in the manner of Dylan Thomas, does lovingly detailed cartoons and caricatures for the programmes of his plays, often paints his own sets and has

directed and acted in his own plays.

Despite all this he is hardly known outside Melbourne. There were a couple of productions in Sydney last year but he still feels rejected by the Sydney theatre establishment. His three productions at The Playbox, *The Death Of Moira*, *The Golden Goldbergs* and *The Inevitability of Angels* all played to capacity houses in the small upstairs theatre, but so far there's been no show downstairs and Lower again sees Dickens upstairs? — "If theatre is Luigi, what do you have to do to get a gurney?" He says he's sick and tired of playing in small theatres — "I want to see a couple of hundred people laughing."

Dickens' plays are peopled with eccentric, plain eccentrics like Mag and Bag in *The Horror of The Suburban Nature Strip* who take turns at being the badge and playing on their own presenting themselves, or pilloried eccentric miscreants like the man who has his teeth ripped out by the magical dentist with the bicarbonate in *The Rotting Teeth Show* or Ken Wright, the boy who can't speak with the elict's head above his bed. In his best plays — *The Bridal Suite*, *The Death Of Moira*, *The Golden Goldbergs* and *Lenny Lower* — they are ringing eccentricities who defy death even at it is about to take them.

His heroes are all tragic comedies, mad men of the people: Mo, Lenny Lower, Tony Hancock and Lenny Bruce — most of them Jews. Dickens has an instinctive affinity for Jews, years of being around Acland St and the cheap boarding houses at St Kilda only partly explains it; the real reason lies more in his identification with the particular comic imaginations of the dispossessed. He has a similar feeling for the dispossessed rural battlers and fireman workers and his comedy has consistently invoked and paid tribute to a working class Australian comic tradition; many of his short newspaper pieces are written in the style of Lower, and he has revived Dad and Dave and relocated them on a vacant lot beside Georges.

The play about Lenny Lower has been Dickens' passion for years now, never has he done so much research or so many drafts, of all his eccentric Lower is the closest to himself. For Dickens, Lower is the ultimate journalist, and the play is opening with a benefit night for the AJA. "Lower entertained every class from nobles and warrenesses to intellectuals who read Gorki and Dostoyevsky, yet the higher echelon of the press never let him know and say he was a drunken bum." Denis Moore will play Lower and Dickens is hoping to direct it himself, though The Playbox has assigned it to Ross Cramphorn. Dickens says it will be refined theatre craft but he wants it to

be "rough as guts, all broken glass and smashed teeth, a bagatelle of eight pages, pantomime, routines and such dancings with critics..."

Afterwards, Almost Managing have plans to take the show to Sydney for a season at the Bondi Pavilion. Meanwhile Dickens is writing a new show for Anne O'Shaughnessy who starred as *Our Broken Star* at La Mama last year, and he's begun a play about Lenny Bruce in Australia.

Recently some schoolkids doing a project on cannibalism, wrote to him and he sent them a drawing and the immortal advice — "Always start with the nose hairs".

HEWETT

New Romance With The Past



Photo: Paul McElroy

by Michael Le Moigne

One of Western Australia's best-loved exports, playwright Dorothy Hewett has exchanged the wide open space of her native WA wheatbelt for a town house in Sydney with a constant cacophony of traffic, from two of the city's busiest streets.

It was not a question of the grass being greener for the few professional playwrights in Australia, the lawn is

not particularly lush on either side of the cultural slings-and-arrows.

A companion such as the one Dorothy Hewett has received from the Perth Playhouse, for a new play to premiere at the 1982 Perth Festival (9 February to 6 March) is worth approximately 2% of the average fee paid for an Australian feature film script. Further royalties in the form of a share of box office revenue usually

do little to make up the deficit unless the play is exceptionally successful.

Dorothy Hewett freely admits that the only plus so far that has made her art money has been *The Man from Milwaukee*. Rodney Fisher's lively production of that play for the STC played to packed houses for six weeks run at the Sydney Opera House, and other productions were mounted in Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, where it formed part of WA's 150th anniversary celebrations. The play is all too ready the thing with which to pay the rent.

One of the few things Dorothy Hewett has in common with Ernest Hemingway is an ability to write boldly about places she has left. Muhanga, like Dylan Thomas' village in *Under Milk Wood*, had a wonderful authenticity of observation, as well as a deeper, more poetic truth.

The new play, *Fields of Heaven*, is, she says, quite different from *Muhanga*: it's set in the same area but different in theme, in tone and in style. It is a romantic tragedy set in the Champs Elysées of the WA hinterland.

The main theme is a love story about the destructive power of sexual love. A secondary theme is the destruction of

the environment, by greed and by the impact of agriculture. It is also about immigrants, Italian immigrants who arrived in WA in some numbers during the play's time-scale, 1929 to 1951, to work, to settle or as prisoners-of-war from Italy.

The hero of *Fields of Heaven* is Romeo Barlow, who arrives in WA shortly before the Great Depression. A one-time follower of the Italian fascist poet, Gabriele d'Annunzio, his revolutionary enthusiasm has led him to be exiled from Italy. In 1929, we find him working for a prosperous wheat and sheep farmer called Tom Barrow.

In the best traditions of romantic literature, the farmer has a beautiful daughter, with whom the Italian promptly falls in love. And she with him. Now, Tom Barrow has highly progressive ideas on conservation and reforestation and the like, but being of a frugal nature, he has no intention of wasting a perfectly good daughter on the hired help.

Poor Louise is sent away to finishing school and the Italian, a somewhat ruthless and ambitious estate, sets his sights a little lower and rescues the daughter of a smaller farmer next

door. Louise comes home, unsuspecting on the day of the wedding.

But they still find each other irresistible, and the affair continues as before. Louise equally ruthlessly in her way, becomes pregnant to force the situation to an explosion. Her plan fails because the Italian backs off. His new wife nobly steps into the family breach and offers to bring up Louise's illegitimate son as her own. Defeated and heartbroken, Louise is dispatched in Europe to study painting. Her exile and isolation is completed by the eruption of the Second World War.

Back in Australia, the Italian is making his fortune and Tom Barrow is taking to the bottle. By the time Louise comes home, the family property is up for sale and she has to fight for their survival. Her adversary is the only man she has ever loved, aided by the 16-year-old son she has never been allowed to acknowledge.

Those readers who fear I may have spoiled their enjoyment of the play by revealing too much of the plot may rest assured that there are many more twists and turns before a bitter-sweet conclusion. It is a rich story, passionately nihilistic and yet full of subtleties, by *Wuthering Heights* of *Great Wish for Wind*, and if Dorothy Hewett's song is as good as her plot, it could be a masterpiece.

Les Murray and Natalie Rose from Sydney will join the Playhouse company to play the two leads, who are required to age from 28 to 50 and from 16 to 38 respectively in the course of the play. The WA cast includes Joan Sydney, Alan Cassell and Pat Skerington.

Asked by the Playhouse management to suggest a director, Dorothy Hewett had no hesitation in choosing Rodney Fisher — "He's my favorite person to work with." They are both delighted to continue the successful collaboration which began with *Muhanga*.

One problem in Perth will be the small Playhouse stage, but they intend to keep the scenery as open and uncluttered as possible, to maximize the necessary illusion of huge skies and space. Looking to the future, they are hoping to persuade the Sydney Theater Company to put on *Fields of Heaven* at the Opera House in 1983. The export of West Australian wisdom, warmth and wit continues.



Rodney Fisher's production of *Muhanga* (Rex) at the Swan Theatre, Perth.

STEPHEN SEWELL

In Conversation With Anthony Barclay



"The individual has ceased to exist in the sense that the word individual has previously been understood, this coming at a time when because of extended forms of social relations the individual appeared to be the final mode of existence possible and moreover these two contradictory movements developing with the same pace and from the same source are that now the only meaning is no meaning at all for if there is any meaning it can only be found in social reality...".

Rehearsal's prologue; a monologue from Sewell's *Whoreson: The Bright World*.

Katharine Brisbane in "A New Era" (74 May 1981) defined two elements she found that our new dramatists shared — she included Sewell in this group: "Looked at dispassionately a new intellectual kind of cruelty is creeping into our theatre, a cruelty that has not been there before, because it points the finger of accusation at the audience... they have a second quality... in common... they are sometimes impatient with the dramatic means of discovery and want to shake us into caring."

Stephen Sewell: "I don't really understand the concept of cruelty as such... to me much Australian writing of the 70's was dull, caretaking and safe. It struck me that the theatre, the writers, are behind, not leading the audience. My attempts are to express as clearly as I can the kinds of contradictions operative in

our society (and the individuals who are part of it) in the process of transforming it."

SEWELL AND THE IMPACT.

Jeremy Ridgman's claim that *Trovato* was the most performed new Australian play of 79-80 is difficult to dispute. (APG April '79, Nugroho February 1980, Carriageworks, July 1980, La Boite, August 1980, Darwin, August 1981). One can draw one's own conclusions from that, but it is indicative of how Sewell powered his second major work into our theatre, and above all, powered an emotionally dramatic work, that was assured in form as in content. Yet that content was especially political and intellectual, avoiding the muckheims of farce or easy satire, groundlessly uncompromising, demanding. And that was new in our theatre.

Of course, not everyone liked the work. One critic, who when admitted she thought Leni and Sular were pretty much the same person, found it all "good clean Agatha Christie" — a response that I find cripplingly not extraordinary. (Or let Ridgman tell us the infamous first sight at La Boite which saw the departure of some dozen audience, one of whom felt sufficiently inspired to leave a "gob of phlegm" on the stage. At least that's something to the diffuse passions Sewell can inspire.) Or, for that writer, the marvellous Nuredd opening under the very steady hand of Neil Armfield which drew such

excellent performances from Michele Fawdon, Barry Otto and the reprehensible Max Gillies.

Trovato drew fairly good responses from its recent runnings in London at the Hampstead Theatre (directed by Neil Johnstone). But Sewell is relatively defensive about all this — especially the critical response. To him it reflected a kind of cultural/national chauvinism, if you like, that an Australian playwright could move with ease among such complex socio-historical material. No critic challenged the integrity of the play's content. Sewell, though, tempers any discussion of this by a more interested in the differences between Australian and British audiences and concedes the harsher political realities facing the latter may have mellowed the "shocking brutality" of the Lebeshev-Krasin torture scenes. But even the more acute Australian audiences (those shown on gob of Brisbane phlegm) saw this as the play's concrete or physical image of a broad specific problem set in a specific country at a specific time. Not that *Trovato* left one without interesting insights into the behaviour of our own liberal democracies — a matter that Sewell is attending to in *Whoreson: The Bright World*.

SEWELL: THE BACKGROUND.

We are all of us familiar with the orthodoxy of some of our better

playwrights' backgrounds (Walsham's in engineering, Hibberd's medicine), so with Sewell. He graduated in 1974 from Sydney University in Science and Maths. Of University "back-work, compartmental, abstractions that seemed away from contact with the specifics of time and place." It's a point that Sewell returns to again and again.

He does not suggest that playwriting was arrived at by any conscious decision. But now, at least, he is very articulate on what a playwright should be about. "(one) committed to a deep involvement with the forces that are transforming society, and to much more besides" (17 Jan 1981). A brief but annotated stint of writing at the Stanley Palmer Cultural Palace took place in 1974-75. But then Sewell travelled North to develop an association with La Boisé commencing more or less in 1976 and culminating in 1978 in the production of his first full length play *Tir Parker We Loved On A Beach By The Sea*. This world premiere opened in July — an amateur performance, directed by Jeremy Rdgman. La Boisé was experiencing uneven artistic programming and the play was slammed by one national critic as well as the local Brisbane press. The result — fairly poor houses.

But *Fosse* had another, more successful, run earlier this year by the Griffin Theatre at the State Theatre in Sydney. Through the cast tended to be uneven and parts of it were overwritten, its power was undeniable; it deserves a fully professional outing in the future. (For those interested Sewell says the work has no autobiographical material — it is a series of observations of Australia from the 80's to the present day.)

During 1978 the ABC commissioned a work that was to eventually become *Teasers* and this brought Sewell South again. This year he took up writer-in-residency at Nimrod from July to December.

THE NIMROD RESIDENCY.

The close association that developed with Arnfield and members of the Nimrod Company during *Teasers* meant that Sewell was involved in Nimrod affairs prior to his official writer-in-residency. That Nimrod's

changes of policy have attracted a great amount of media flak this year would be an understatement and it is precisely this "model" slant about which Sewell feels passionate. He admits the recent loss of the four women from the Nimrod staff is a definite set-back, but argues that a process of redefinition from static policies to audiences for whom the work is to be presented are issues that all theatre companies must face — sooner or later. Nimrod did it in 1981.

He points out rightly that while the Women-and-Theatre project attracted most flak, that the Downstairs box-office had overwhelming success. Even if its audiences were the converted, still Nimrod provided a theatre that was not to be found elsewhere in Sydney and that had much to do with the drive and energy of Chris Westwood. Of course the Belles Eures of Nimrod did not sing or act well — those pale knig-hangs-at-arm's-bought-up-on-a-steady-diet-of-early-'70s-Nimrod-were-left-alone-and-listering, the sedge withered from the lake. Of course my point could be flagrant but it is not entirely so intended. Re-definition of the role of a theatre in our society can result in everything from the banal to the brilliant and, at best, the issue is contentious. For now.

To Sewell the issue of more or less equal female/male parts in plays is a simple matter of justice. And that does not end at the theatre foyer — it is an issue that extends deeply into our society. The three female roles in *Widower* are a testimony to this challenging, demanding part.

And one cannot praise Michelle Fawdon's powerful, tormented performance as Armain Trenor from the mind. Two readings of *Widower* are enough to convince me we are in for a similar treat — but that is a matter I will leave to the individual to decide.

SEWELL'S BRIGHT OR BRAVE WORLDS?

Sewell has been working on *Widower* for 18 months now and as I write the play's final act is being revised. He admits he finds writing a difficult task and has freely made draft copies of the script available to Arnfield and any other Nimrod company members interested. He also listens appetitively to the advice of friends whom he

considers to be more politically and intellectually astute on the content and detail of his plays. There is a filtering sense of the co-operative at work here, though this is never allowed to degenerate into free-for-all contributions.

His next project in a company effort to be entitled *The Blue Pitcher* which Nimrod will stage next year (probably April-May). Direction after that is not certain but he admits to a desire to follow up a broadening interest in the Pacific/Australian region and to write a comedy on social democracy. At this point it seems that Arnfield could be involved in these works.

If Sewell is uncompromising — or perhaps demanding — this can be an actor's delight and an audience's pleasure. *Widower* is set in contemporary Germany with all the very contemporary contradictions of liberal democracy — a subject that could touch on the raw nerves of those concerned about the direction of Western societies. To Sewell the play dramatises issues which exist in the lives of real people, but issues he believes we are not paying enough attention to.

To Sewell we live in an idealistic society in the program sense that we deal with abstractions that avoid real issues and, above all, the blinding contradictions that surround us. Interestingly Sewell admits to one very personal contradiction. He hates theatre with all its blemishes and snags. Yet later in our conversation he readily admits to its advantage over film. Of all art forms, theatre carries most intellectual weight (with the singular exception of books), with its budgets that are not overwhelmingly large and, above all, with an potential air of liberation as it brings together a body of individuals as performers and spectators. But perhaps that is not entirely a contradiction. For herein lies Sewell's strength as a dramatist not purely of ideas per se, but as one who looks and observes with the power to absorb and ground real people and things as they operate in real life. From "job of phlegm" to high critical praise, Sewell is one who provokes his audiences with the passion of his obsession. Whatever one's reservations it is his integrity that makes him one of our most compelling young writers.

The Director As Catalyst

JIM SHARMAN LOOKS AHEAD



By Michael Morley

About the only plans of Jim Sharman's which have not been magnificently realized in the last months were those for his own far-away-from-it-all Christmas holiday. But he still seemed to be facing the prospect of Christmas and New Year in Adelaide with a commendably sanguine outlook not to mention the good-humoured patience with which he faced my intrusion on what was undoubtedly a well-earned break from his responsibilities as Director, both of the 1982 Adelaide Festival, and of the re-organized Lighthouse State Theatre Company.

But this, just is precisely one which angers well both for the Festival and the future of Lighthouse — given Adelaide's penchant for savaging any cultural figure who gives the remotest hint of being more concerned with the responsibilities of his job than with cultivating the media. Not that Sharman downgrades the need for PR; it is something he has had to learn over the past months, and although his style might in some respects be termed "low-profile", it is nevertheless distinctive and individual.

One has only to look at the layout of the Festival brochure and note some of the offerings to realize that in both form and content, his attitudes and predilections are clearly on view, and, while no Festival Director wishes to single out special children (the Press will all too readily infer that other offerings are only fill-ins), it is clear that he has a particular interest in the

success of the Edward Hopper exhibition and the Pina Bausch dance company. He is reluctant to classify theestival in terms of art form, but his own current concerns — with the narrative and visual modes — are reflected in these two events, and, indeed, in works like the Sam Shepard play and the TV event.

At the same time the 1982 Festival is more overtly contemporary in style than its predecessor. This is in keeping both with Sharman's attitudes and with the view of his predecessor, Christopher Hunt, that the 1980 Festival would be the last to follow the more traditional European model. Nor that Sharman deems the need for cultural links with Europe, he also advocate of a "highbrow/literary" policy. But he does feel strongly that "the older cultures' central drive is toward massagers to hold the triumphs of the past"; one needs to acknowledge that Australia can be seen, in terms of art and culture, as somewhat like a third-world society. And what should be important in the Festival are events with a relationship to Australia, and with an impact that would last beyond the Festival fortnight.

He sees his own role — both within

the Festival and in the development of Lighthouse — as a catalyst, and is intent on giving Australian musicians and actors the opportunity of working with distinguished overseas practitioners. Hence the invitations to David Hare to direct his own new play with the Sydney Theatre Company, and to Mark Elder and Ronald Zollman to work with Australian orchestras.

The mix of the old and the new, the traditional and the experimental, the European and the Australian is evident also in the plans and programs for Lighthouse. In spite of all reports to the contrary, he has not turned his back on the classics; after all, the new season includes Shakespeare, Brecht and Kleist, along with Louis Nowra and Patrick White. And he is looking forward to working on Afreda's Neph's Drown in particular, saying as he does, "The production of the classics as informing the work of the present."

But hard and fast categorization is not for him: the interaction between "high" and "low" culture is crucial, provided it is not pursued self-consciously. And any major theatre company with a progressive outlook must still start with a repertoire that will display to its prospective audience a

combination of the familiar and the adventurous. If there is one common denominator for the season it is that of "romance and reality" and the search for imagination and emotion in the theater. The move into new territory comes, he feels after *Master George* with Bill Harding's new (and first) play, *Silver Linings* — "a rather acerbic comedy about what happens to Chekhov's Three Sisters during the Russian Revolution, when they find out that everything they've been complaining about in the original play turns out to be positive advantage — not the least being *not* getting to Moscow!"

And the last project for the year — *Romeo & Juliet* — will also be the first to take advantage of the company's permanent ensemble structure. The plan is to workshop ideas and sketches, with the company throughout the year, and the final script will be written by Louis Nowra in close collaboration with the performers. The hope, at this stage, is to break away from the traditional play format with this project, and to involve the members of the company — designers, musicians and performers — in every stage of the process.

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MICHAEL EDGELEY

Australia's Greatest Showman

With the opening of the Australian production of *Barnum*, the musical based on the life of the American entrepreneur who became known as the world's greatest showman, inevitably comparisons have been made between the star of the show, Reg Livermore, and its eponymous hero, Phineas T Barnum. The real comparison, however, is not with the actor, but with the entrepreneur behind the show, Michael Edgeley. The scope of Edgeley's promotions to date may fall short of those of Barnum, remaining as he has within the Australian entertainment scene (though his break into films with *Men From Sheep River* may put them on a par internationally), but his leadership in the field, his accommodation in many ways by methods, make Michael Edgeley a true inheritor of Phineas T Barnum's extraordinary showmanship.

Edgeley was born into showbusiness, his father and uncle having been Edgeley and Chase, comedy duo and entrepreneurial company, while Barnum was the son of a farmer/tavern keeper, but both acquired a basic business grounding in their early years. Barnum senior saw that his son was not cut out for a simple life on the land and bought him a store to manage. Eric Edgeley wanted his son to have a "normal" upbringing and career outside of the business and sent him off to learn accountancy. A combination of the commercial acumen and know-how and an extraordinary flair for presenting the spectacle has made both men the



"I don't reject one bit of personal or business life."

"No one else comes within cooee of us now."

"I always take the philosophy that to get it you've got to spend it."

"We do better than anyone else. We're very good at selling shows."

commanding entrepreneurs of their times, and alongside these qualities run an amazing instinct for both the value of publicity, professional and personal, that has put both them and their products head and shoulders above their competitors.

Michael Edgeley, though, is not the egocentric, self-promoter that Barnum allegedly was, nor such a ruthless producer. A Major Bond once said "I never knew a more heartless man, or one who knew the value and possibilities of a dollar more than P.T. Barnum" and claimed that whenever of his Armadas was run over and killed by a chariot he called it "rather a benefit than a loss" as another was waiting for her place!

Edgeley describes himself as having "always been interested in making a dollar", and anyone who has had dealings with him will know him to be an uncompromising businessman, but his concern for his staff and especially his organisation is comparable to that for his family. In many ways it is precisely this. He is the head of the company that bears his name, but in which his mother, sister, wife and previously brother, all play large roles. Even the staff who are not family are treated more or less equally — "Part of our success has always been that it is a family affair, they all work on a percentage of profits, everyone feels personally responsible — they get a physical high from a full theatre or equally an empty theatre in the pit

Fortunately our success rate is eight out of ten."

Edgley feels that his staff place more emphasis on "the Michael Edgley side" than he does himself. When his father died in 1967 he, with his mother and brother Philip, ran the firm which was still called Edgley and Dave, but "as my public identity grew, the firm decided to use me as a figurehead and so the name was changed to Michael Edgley International. I'm now thinking of calling out the Michael, my desire is to tone my public influence down."

But at the moment he still appears in the television commercials for his show, personally recommending them to the public, and the romance of the showbusiness family, the attractive young husband and wife team and the luxurious lifestyle are tastefully played up, not to mention the car ads of a few years ago and his American Express endorsement.

While this is all subtlety itself, compared to the capital P.T. Barnum made out of even his misfortunes, such as a stint in prison or an injured leg, selling in what Edgley believes "we do better than anyone else." He believes the organisation employs the country's two best publicists, his wife Jeni, and Susie Howe. The only major difference in judgement he had with Kerr Brodzuk in various Edgley-Williamson joint enterprises was in the area of publicity.

"Once my father was gone, he [Brodzuk] was the only person I held in great respect — we had a wonderful relationship over the years and he was very helpful to me. He could be difficult, he was very tight with money. Sometimes I wanted to spend a lot of money on promoting something and Kerr would say 'Don't waste it'. I always take the philosophy that if you've got it you've got to spend it, and we've proved that with, for instance, the Moscow Circus on Ice. We spent \$200,000 on promotion and put through 1,200,000 people in 12 weeks — it was unheard of. It grossed \$7 or \$8 million. We work out our costs very carefully and spend up to 20% of the gross on promotion."

Like Barnum, Edgley doesn't believe in publicity without product — "If they don't like it they won't come back, or even come at all, because of word of mouth. You might be able to promote to fill the first week, but then it's on the



Michael and Jeni Edgley with Eric Douglas during the Moscow Circus tour.

product." Barnum made it his business to search out the most spectacular acts around the world and Edgley's tend to pick up on successes in America and England and mount them in Australia. Both too, have made their break and relied heavily on a single particular spectacular. For Barnum it was the extraordinary performance of the midget General Tom Thumb, in Edgley's case it has been the Russian connection.

Surprisingly, it did not take many years of diplomatic manoeuvres for

Edgley's to corner the market in presenting Russian extravaganzas — ballets, circuses, diabelli and singing. In fact the Russians approached Eric Edgley via the Embassy in Canberra to ask if he would be interested in bringing over some of their performers to Australia. He was invited to go to Moscow to see if he thought it would be appropriate and the results of this visit are now history. (The only reason Edgley's have not had any Russian shows of late is an embargo on them entering Australia since the Afghanistan crisis.)

In fact it was at Michael's insistence that the fruits of this offer came to bear. When his father died in 1967, the company was only just beginning to break even after 30 years. Michael inherited little in the way of money, but an enormous amount of goodwill, experience and contacts. "He'd just broken the ice with the Russians and one of my first goals was to diversify and present a lot more, and this is still my policy." The first really big success didn't come until 1978 with the Moscow Circus. It began its tour in Perth and the day it opened there the company was down to as low as \$3,000. With Barnum-like belief and personal involvement, Edgley persuaded his mother to mortgage the family house to raise their share of the venture. It was a huge success and has given him both the capital and confidence to go on and do more.

"The psychological side of it is so



important, like ice tennis players, the psychological determination to do something. Often I feel depressed and think we're not doing it the right way. People around me say, yes we are, we're the best, snap out of it and get on and do it."

Phenomenal Bartram spent a long time trying to out-spectacular his competitors such as James A. Bailey and the Ringling Brothers, eventually he decided to stop trying to beat them and joined them, creating the even more successful amalgam which produced *The Greatest Show On Earth* (edictio in Edgley's *Greatest Circus on Earth*, 1977) for many years. Edgley has always believed in harmonious relations with other companies and has always sought to involve others in their productions. Eric Edgley always maintained that he was wrong to be too greedy and Michael agrees that it's better to have 20% of a success than 100% of a failure. Such a philosophy has allowed the company a greater flexibility and has also helped many others — J.C. Williamson, for instance, could have gone out of business a good five years before it did without the success of the Edgley attractions. Had he gone it alone though, Eric says, they would now be billionaires.

Their major partners now are often the government funded entrepreneurs,

the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust, with both of whom they have very good relations. As Edgley says, it gets back to flexibility, and if the government at some time in the future ceases to permit these bodies to be involved in entrepreneurial activities then he will simply look elsewhere. But, "No one else comes within cooee of us now that Ken Brodrick is in retirement and Harry M Miller has lost interest in the theatrical side of things," he claims, and feels that the best minds in the country are now contained within the Edgley organisation.

All members of the organisation travel, consider shows and put in their opinion, but, the way Michael Edgley likes it at least, the productions they mount virtually choose themselves. There are two sides to the Australian situation — on the positive you can afford to sit back and see which shows take off in the West End and on Broadway before taking a punt on mounting them here, and by the time they do get on, the public will know a lot about them and their success, or the negative, the costs of mounting and touring a production here are immense because of labour costs and distances and the small audiences are very limiting of the length of seasons.

"*Evita*," says Edgley, "can run long, although it was unprofitable to the end."



Jennifer Murphy had problems with her voice, Pam LaPace was hired to three months work by the circus, and as the best Evita in the world could hardly be successfully replaced by the third Australian Evita.

Barrow was chosen by Edgley's consultant Robert Helpmann, who phoned Edgley on holiday in Hawaii after opening night to say that he must do it and the only person to do it with was Reg Livermore. Livermore, then being urged by London audiences, saw the show in New York and, with a few niggings, agreed to do it. Edgley says he will leave Jim Dale and Michael Crawford for dead. "He'll knock their eyes out. And then will give Australia the chance to see the wholesome Reg Livermore."

Barrow the musical may give Livermore a chance to show a more lovable side to his public, but Bartram the man was, by all accounts, hardly an easy person to be around. Michael Edgley describes himself as still "pretty intense, but mellowing with security." I'm a difficult sort of person to live with. Business has always been a part of family life, though over the last four years with four great kids growing up we have managed to have more family life. But we enjoy what we're doing — new shows, the film (*After Days*, *Snowy River*), a series of children's programmes for TV, a theme park in Perth. We couldn't do the intense work, long hours if we didn't enjoy it.

"I don't think I'll ever retire, but by the time I'm 50 I'd like to tone it down a little, leave some time to enjoy life. We do up to 20 shows a year; I'd like to be involved in one or two and a film perhaps. I don't expect one bit of personal or business life, but at 50 (some 10 years away) I'd like to have a little pressure taken off."

Already Michael Edgley's impact has been recognised with an MBE — when he received it in 1977 he was the youngest Australian ever to be awarded one for theatre — and in 1976 Western Australia honoured him with the prestigious "Citizen of the Year" award.

The way things are going we might not have to wait a hundred years for Edgley — the Musical, but choosing a lead might prove harder than for Bartram. Jim is already working on the book.



U.K.

Women (and Robyn Archer) in London

by Irving Wardle

Women's theatre has been going strong in Britain for over a decade, but it is only within the past year that its ranks have been strengthened by a "generation of second-generation feminists who differ in several ways from their doctored elders. For one thing they acknowledge that the sex war is only part of a larger game in which men as well as women are the losers; that if there were less frustration in factories and desk quارات there would be fewer tears over the kitchen sink. Also the movement has acquired a much-needed sense of fun. The

arguments are again the same, but exhortation has given way to satire. Men may be unpeckable boors, but why do we have to be boozing as well?

On the examples (university or off), take a piece like Sarah Daniels' *Ripen Our Buttercup* (Royal Court, Islington) which tells the tale of a church-matcher, and is subsumed in male propaganda that she supposes it to be her own fault when she starts going mad. In Miss Daniels' hands, this sad story becomes a suburban Punch and Judy show with recurrent dolls battering each other in a pub in the setting of a fungus-infested kitchen. An atmosphere of bawdy good cheer pervades the carriage: "Your father's just choked to death on a stone," announces one long-suffering woman, and her cross-eyed nemesis only appears in Tinsel-tableaux. The whole thing is ruined with gloriously banal gags which smash their dreams in the heroine's words note: "Dear David, Your dinner and my head are in the oven."

For those who prefer substance to merriment, there is Clive Luckham's *Tayford Town* (Lyric, Hammersmith) in which a girl who has been relentlessly

bulled by parents, teachers, and employers finally rebels within marriage and turns her husband into the domestic slave. What transpires is that their wish-fulfilment into actuality is the fact that it is staged in a boxing ring, with every row from the cradle to the marriage bed presented as increasingly punishing bouts in a rite fight.

Change the metaphor and you get *A Pack of Women* (Doll's House), whose title refers not to the company of three but to the eight of Robyn Archer and her partners laying out a deck of cards to the retreat: "How do you cook at a game when the rules keep changing?", the idea being that rather than through patience, skill, need, poker, or some game yet to be devised, women deserve a new deal. This feminist cultism runs through the evidence from the Beccars and Dorothy Wordsworth ("Wilson was working all the morning 'lashed pen'") to Betty Medford and Dolly Parton, with passing contributions from the Continental feminist movement.

Miss Archer, who needs no introduction to T.I. readers, rounded up her colours mighty quick, though it was not until Bell-Jones, with a roaring "Merry Christmas Blues", that



Jacki Ellis, Marion Roach and David Fielder in *Tayford Town* (compos: a Trafford Team)

she had the house at her mercy. After that, neither she nor anyone else in the show could always be wrong, and the evening built up into a mood of inter-racial solidarity, but summed up in Lynn McCarthy's "Dear Committee, You've gotta let us answer for..."

These shows, and others like them, are proliferating on grassroots stages and in the mic and pub theatres of the London fringe. Women playwrights, if not necessarily themselves, are also coming through with that rarest of all theatrical commodities: the commercially viable and artistically honest West End play.

I reported last year on Nell Dwyer's *Steamer*. This has been followed by an equally popular piece called *Warmer Ambassadors* by the previously unknown Ellen Dwyer who tells the perennial English tale of the prodigal's homecoming — the prodigal in this case being a bright daughter who escaped into a smart metropolitan marriage, now shrewdly rejoining for a family funeral which reopens the wounds of childhood, and contains the reward of those who stayed put with that of those who got away. It goes without saying that Marian will be the intellectual superior of her blithered village clan who dismiss her education as "showing off", and that the play will swing round to show there is as much right on their side as there is on hers.

The story is being acted out every day of the week in homes throughout the land, and what counts is not the scenario but the individual life the writer puts into it, as witness the first scene with the family members returning to a hymn with that backs to the audience. Marian (Janet Fairlight) takes advantage of this hush to whip round and tell us in her unassured monotone of the discussed. The speech is witty, it supplies information, and it establishes not only her own witty character, but that of the minister who prefers to give the family a hymn rather than recall them with tactless platitudes about a son he never knew.

Here, and in the ensuing funeral party we see at the hands of a Methodist community which will strike an immediate unifying chord in anyone brought up in the atmosphere of bad choir, wrong-note organ playing and Harvest Festival garlands of plastic onions. Play and production alike are as spare as a piece of Shaker furniture.

This is a modest and unashamedly poor play. Happily to give a banal picture of how life goes on, for countless inter-spousal people, and offers a reasonably well-written debate between the eternal antagonists of personal loyalty and self-fulfilment. It is typical of Miss Dwyer and that when the usually appears to come down on the side of loyalty she sends things up with the glee of a rebel teenager of the post-Generation planning to scale the wall to the widower couple.



Jennifer Lee Powell and Janet Fairlight in *Steamer*.



Sisters

by Karl Lestat

Suddenly sisters — and the throe of sisterhood — are abloom on New York stages. It's logical enough when you think about it, I suppose. After the initial theatrical wave of feminist fervour, the examination of sisterhood is a natural second step. That two of these plays are written by young women demonstrates how the women's movement may be opening up new reservoirs of talent.

providing new perspectives while giving the drama a shot in the arm.

Chisholm showed on the subtleties and complexities that can be created with three sisters and Beth Henley has done the same with *Clothes in the Dark* (a sort of *The Three Sisters Go Cross-Dress Society*). What is remarkable is that this is Ms Henley's first play. It won the 1979 Great American Play Contest sponsored by the Actors Theatre of Louisville, then picked up last year's Pulitzer Prize in Drama when produced off-Broadway at the Manhattan Theatre Club. Now the production has been brought intact to Broadway and Ms Henley can walk contrite and make a big Broadway bow.

Although there are a couple of Chisholm moments in *Clothes in the Dark*, it is not what these three sisters are about. What Ms Henley has given us is a southern Gothic comedy whose principal device is comedy. The coming together of

the three sisters is closed when Babe the stampen water shows her husband, Meg, a faded singer (Leslie) from California to the family home in Hazelton, Massachusetts. Left by the master stay-at-home sister, Lettie, Babe is released on her and the far and calamitous begins. Centuries, past and present, come in bursts and the sense of each-gravity is well maintained that by the third act when Griselda has a stroke, you join with the sisters in a fit of giggles.

Now that is sticky stuff but Mr Henley gives it a wacky and unnecessary twist that is maintained throughout three well-structured acts. As befit the rule, there is a constant comedy and Mr Henley cleverly plays one off the back of the other. The originality and variety of the comedy program is productive素材 for Ruth Henley.

The play has been given a wonderfully cohesive production by director Michael Berthold and as the three sisters, Elizabeth Mackay, Mary Beth Hart and Maureen

are just that — sisters — each being pragmatic and funny in turn. All the young lawyer defending Babe, Peter MacNicol makes an auspicious Broadway debut.

Off-Broadway at the Second Stage, Wendy Kesselman presents a darker view of togetherness in *Ms. Sister or the Show*. This play was also first presented at the Actors' Theatre at Louisville (Jon Jory there deserves some sort of medal) and we in New York are grateful to the Second Stage which has the commendable policy of producing plays of the last two years that deserve another chance.

Ms. Sister or the Show is based on a true incident that took place in the French town of Le Mans in the early 1930s. Two-cantant nuns got to work for Madame Deneuve and her teenage daughter. The play is entertainment and we watch as Ms Kesselman presents episodic scenes showing the servant/mistress and sister/sister relationships over a period of several years. The four women are trapped in a social pressure cooker and Ms Kesselman slowly

brings the play to its boil with its inevitable explosive ending. Repression on every level is the theme of the play and Ms Kesselman provides telling insights on this theme as she accentuates sexual dimension denied to her horrific nuns.

A notable failing — with the playwright partly to blame, but principally the directors, Inessa Lekkere and Carole Rothman, should take the rap — is the production's lack of period scene and place. This is the French provincial via Luxembourg and the early scenes are off-putting on this account. It is only when we are drawn into the characters' relationships that Ms Kesselman can begin to work her evil spell. Beverly Maye is the mistress anyone would want to murder, yet if anyone would want to murder, yet the performance contains expert comic touches. Lisa Banes, as the older sister, is the play's driving force and captures exactly the regressive dynamics that is central to the play. Elizabeth McGovern (who at twenty already has a following through her film *Ordinary People* and *Rabbit*) makes the younger sister a study in innocence and flowing sensuality. Ms McGovern's beauty and physical charm look hot they are combined with a lively intelligence. She is a most welcome rising star.

Katharine Hepburn is a star that has long had a fixed place in the theatrical firmament. She is back on Broadway with Dorothy Loudon in Ernest Thompson's *The West Side Waltz*. For a comparatively young playwright, Mr Thompson has a surprising interest in the topic of aging. His last play *On Golden Pond* being on the same subject (Hepburn is currently appearing in the film with Henry Fonda).

In *The West Side Waltz* Ms Hepburn is a retired music teacher living on New York's West Side. Dorothy Loudon is a virgin violinist who lives in the same building. One of the principal themes Mr Thompson deals with, is the progression of Ms Loudon in pursuing a truly sisterly relationship with Ms Hepburn — the violinist and pianist in harmony. And we get that pool before final curtain, wouldn't you know?

The West Side Waltz is what used to be called a "vehicle" — and a lousy and creaky vehicle it is at that. There are no scenes where the major interest is just when medical doctor Agi has reduced Katherine Hepburn as we go down to the finale. Mr Thompson's writing is contrived and inconsistent. Ms Hepburn is again the embodiment of every Yankee wife — spry, independent, and sharp tongued. She almost succeeds in convincing the shopworn material with brightness and a sense of cut through sheer willpower. And when all else is lost you can look in those fabulous cheekbones. Now if only Ruth Henley could be persuaded to write a character (not a vehicle) for Katherine



Katherine Hepburn and Dorothy Loudon in *The West Side Waltz*



Elizabeth Myllymaki and Lisa Banes in *My Sister in This House*



Mary Beth Hurt, Jennifer Warnick and Mrs. Dales in *Circus of the Heart*. Photo: Martin Gray

Hughes. That's the kind of unrehearsed theatre music.

Probably the most popular sister in New York recently has been the title character in Christopher Durang's *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*. The play is the record of a double bill of one-woman and it shows Mr Durang at his most frenetic in his continuing religious war. The play begins just as the title says as a lecture to the audience on Catholic dogma. And by some of Sister's anguish to perform a Hail Mary pagina brings a come-appearance (of sorts) to Sister Mary.

The play, although absurd, is filled with that kind of nervous laughter brought on by scenes that are instantly recognisable from our own life. It is disturbingly funny and wonderfully meant to give offence where possible. Mr Durang always has structural problems with his plays and here it is the keep crying. As Sister Mary, Elizabeth Frane is comic while being commanding enough so Brighton stage adults who have paid for their seats. The curtain closer, *Peculiar Knights*, shows an eccentric last in an assemblage of *Bordello, Present Event, End Game* and *A Moon for the Misfit*. The play allows Mr Durang to show some class as playwright and this time the strands of comic invention make a pleasing whole. Christopher Durang is a young American playwright with a truly original and vital voice and this double bill shows him at top form.

The Three Sisters may have never made it to Moscow but many more than that have already arrived in New York On and off Broadway, the unrehearsed of the diverse is flourishing. Look for it at your local theatre.

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Theatre Reviews



A.C.T.

Truth and vitality

HAIR

by Ken Healey

At Tampa Theatre at Ronald Chester, Warrnambool December 12, 1981
Director: Ross Verburg; musical director: Keith Radford; choreographer: Jason Parry
(Australia)

Snagging ovations and overflow crowds will tempt theatre folk to believe that it was during something right in serving the once-disparaged past. *Hair* is the first-drama Conference satellite tape of Warrnambool. The production was truly remarkable for Ross Verburg's tight professional production, and for the tribal unity of the squarely committed kids who made up the cast.

All of the young people in *Hair* sang better than they moved. Acting did not seem too central a concern, as the kids seemed to have reflected the freedoms so shockingly espoused by *Hair* in the 60s, and to wear them as easily as beads, scally gear, or canangs.

The always-sharp story of Claude's call-up made virtually no impression during the longer first act, and precious little in the second. Stephen Price as Claude has a natural presence which served as a focus for Carol Stanley's Sheila, singing up a storm. In Anne Roth as a knowing tribe girl (program) (Dionne) and for the other youth Berger and Paul of Glencoe Bayles and Tony Fatta.

Keith Radford drove his rock band with a fury unusual for Canberra's revised stage. One lone piano one film and had been sold enough to be experiencing *Hair* as doce si there was an integrity from the performers allied to a directorial shaping which captured the truth and vitality of the style.

Scenery was minimal. The rude scene, superbly back-lit by Alanna MacLean, served *Hair* much as the elephant served *Ali* on the other side of Canberra: it brought the curious, who stayed to witness over aspects of the show that they had never known existed.

The moral of the success story is that Canberra's talents liberally subsidised amateur societies must earn whatever dollars they can hunchback gather in the best available professional directors.



Tampa Theatre's *Hair*

Musical directors of semi-pro calibre, should also be engaged where possible. Choreography with untrained dancers and sets made by non-professionals are not nearly as important, and can be integrated into the overall production coverage by a

director of the caliber of Ross Verburg. *Hair* probably succeeded better than a far more expensive professional revival could have done, thereby demonstrating that there is a place for high quality amateur theatre in our cities.

N.S.W.

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THE COCKY OF BUNGAREE

TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS

DESERT FLAMBE

CHEAP THRILLS

By Michael Le Morgan

You Can't Take It With You Miss Hart and George S. Kaufman Drama Theatre Sydney Open House
Opened January 2, 1982

DIRECTOR: ANTHONY HALLER; DESIGNER: ANDREW FORDHAM; COSTUME DESIGNER: ANN FRANCIS; LIGHTING DESIGNER: RICHARD BURTON; STAGE MANAGER: MARGARET LEWIS;
Cast: M. THOMAS, GORDON McDONALD, C. ROSE, HELEN MICHELLE, ANN HARTLEY, THE VICTORIA BIS, ARTHUR HADKIN, STEPHEN GOLDBECK, ROBERT ALEXANDER, JANE FREDRICK, TERRY MCGEE, PATRICK CAMPBELL, ROBERT HUGHES, LISA BURTON, MAGGIE LEE, HIGH MEYERS, MARIA LISSI STYLIS and PAUL WILKINS
(Professional)

Chicago Fred Ward and Ruth Draper with music by JOHN LEWIS; Book and lyrics by MAURICE DAUER; DIRECTOR: RAYMOND SPILLER; REHEARSALS: DECEMBER 31, 1981

DESIGN: RICHARD BURTON; DRESSES: ELIZABETH THOMPSON; MUSICAL DIRECTOR: PAUL COHEN; CHOREOGRAPHY: KAREN LEHRMAN; CHOREOGRAPHER: RON LEHRMAN; CHORUS: RICHARD BURTON, LINDA BROWN, JESS NATHAN, JAMES LINDSAY, RAYNE AND COMPANY; STAGE MANAGER: JOHN WHITTON

Cast: ANNIE HUNTER, GORDON RALSTON, LINDA BROWN, JAMES LINDSAY, J.P. FELTON, LINDY SPARRELL, RICHARD BURTON, JOHN TAYLOR, LINDA LEE, HELEN MAYER, HELEN FRED, HELEN MARCHAND, PAMELA FRASER, MARK LAGATZ, GENE COOPER, GUY POWELL, GUY BURKARD, GARY SHAW, BILL PRIM, CLIFF EGAN
(Professional)

Sesame Street Live Capitol Theatre Sydney Opened December 26, 1981 Michael H. Lyle (Producer)

The Cocky of Bungaree by RICHARD LILHUKE; NATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY ON CLARK ISLAND; SYDNEY HARBOUR OPENED JANUARY 5, 1982

DESIGN: CHRIS JOHNSON; DRESSES: RICHARD BURTON; MUSIC CO-CONDUCTOR: RICHARD DILKOK; PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT: MAGGIE WRIGHT and JOHN WOODWARD; STAGE MANAGER: ANN-MARIE MORGAN

Cast: GLENNA WILKINSON, GREG DENNISON, BRIAN



Paul Kersten and Corinna Münzer in Somer's *The Cocky of Bungaree*

Coleman, Joey Taylor, Marika Nagelius, Paul Brown, Lorraine Skinner, Rose McRae, Christopher Gaze.

Dinner at the Lizard House by Otto von Habsburg
Directed by Michael Sykes. Opened November 20, 1981.
Design: Andrew Miller. Dresser: Vicki Penfold.
Lighting: Duncan Morrison. Sound: Michael Davies.
Music: Michael Carter and Ross Curran. Chorus
group: Sarah Jane, Lucy Whigham, Vicki Whigham.
Cast: Sue Ranta, Robert Stevenson, Michael McRae,
Robert Stevenson, Anna Salkin, Ian French, Robert
Garrison, Helen Morris, Debbie Hall, Lucy Curran,
Sarah Jane, Michael McRae. (Production)

Dinner Blanche Assembly (in Queen Victoria) National
Theatre, Sydney. Opened December 16, 1981.

Directed/Choreographed: Christiane Kubis; Costumes:
Wendy Director; Set and Prop: Designer: Shirley
Cox; Lighting: Designer: John Woodhead; Stage
Manager: Anna Heath.
Cast: Sophie Bush, Roslyn, Marianne, Susanna
Odele, Jenny Wiggs, Gillian Hock, Deborah Kenneally,
Jenny London, Forum: Max Lambert. (Production)
(Production)

Cloud Nine by Caryl Churchill. Credit: Drama
Company of the Nation. Sydney. Opened January 9, 1982.

Directed: Ann Preston. Designer: Jack Webster. Lighting
and Production Manager: David Pines. Stage
Manager: Helen Roberts.
Cast: Pamela Cook, Helen Franklin, Hugh Keightley, Hermann
Thiel, Andrew Latreille. (Production)

The many types of theatre have many
functions: they should delight the eye and ear,
gladden the heart, inspire the imagination
and enlarge the mind. But above all
theatre is an art form of the mind. The
essence of a good play is that it contains
ideas and arguments expressed in an
interesting manner. The rest is window-
dressing.

For this reason, the most important
person in any theatrical production is the
playwright, followed by the actors, who
directly interpret the text, followed by the
director, whose function is to assist the
actors' work and to attend to the various
technical matters such as staging, followed
by the set and costume designers and
technicians who provide the necessary
packaging.

I have not included music on this list
because it is clearly of variable importance.
If a play is more of a musical, it can get
away with being less of a play. Most
musicals do.

There are also exceptions to this general
rule where lead role to lead role is evidently
the director or designer who enables the
stage contribution to a production, but
significantly, it takes a truly exceptional
producer to salvage a poor play.

Quite a lot of nonsense is written about
the creative achievements and failures of
directors, much of it by critics, who should
know better. Actors too, tend to pay lip-
service to the status of directors, because
actors are usually generous, voluble
and intelligent people who have chosen for
themselves an iniquitously low socio-
economic position, for the sake of an ideal.



MICHAEL EDGLEY'S
PRODUCTION OF

CTN

SESAME STREET
LIVE!

of which they often have only the faintest
conception. Also, because actors are
employed by directors, it should be the
other way around.

In the theatre, the director should teach
an actor to be a serious stage manager. In
Sydney, a number of actors' co-operatives
are sprouting up. The "unoperated
co-operative" of Rex Chapman's Shakespeare
Company deserves serious
consideration, although the most recent
example of democratic theatre, *Bitter
Blonde* from the Women and Theatre
Project in Hobart, was a rather one-paced
show.

These revolutionary organisations are
prompted by two productions which
generally do seem to bear the stamp and
style of their respective directors, the
Sydney Theatre Company's *You Can't
Take It With You* (George Ogilvy) and
Chicago (Richard Wharrell).

Ogilvy's previous productions for the
STC were Bob Herbert's delightful period

piece about wartime Sydney, *No Name*,
No Pack Drill, You Can't Take It With You,
by Hart and Kaufman, with a little earlier,
in 1936, on a highly idiosyncratic private
basis in New York State.

Martin Vanderveldt (Al Therswell) had his
family, mindful of the wisdom of the title,
have abandoned their pursuit of the
slightly silly. They have dropped out.
They live at a subsistence level in order to
pursue their dream. Grandfather keeps
smoked in the living-room. Mother (Glen
Ray) wears plays which are never
performed. Father (Mervyn McDonald)
makes fireworks which frequently explode
in the basement, and the real fire-eater,
actor Eric (Jane Henderson) dances through
the house, clawantly convulsed like the
non-Ginger Rogers.

While star Alice (Heather Mitchell),
the only normal member of this family of
fun-thinking eccentricities, becomes engrossed
to the tune of an overfed and under-
employed capitalist family, the scene is set

N.S.W. (continued)

for a vagrant system, compensation-free. Grandfather's answer that he hadn't paid income tax for 15 years because he didn't believe it was brought a roar of approval from the Opera House audience.

The play is ostensibly light and frivolous in the point of absurd, all broad face and burlesque gags. But it also has something to say, something about the quality of life as it could be if we adopted different values. If we valued what we do above what we are paid for doing it.

The true skill of a theatre director lies in focusing the audience's attention, not on what he wants them to see or hear, but through those as what he wants them to think about and realize intellectually and emotionally. George Ogilvie's production was beautifully orchestrated, so as to exploit to the full the theatrical devices of the play, notably the burlesque. The audience's sympathies were engaged for each character in turn so that basically unbelievable scenes became consistently believable, underlining the play's per-

sonal relevance. The result was refreshingly provocative.

The keynote of Richard Wherrett's direction is a displaced Hamley-esque. Whether it is Beck during her scratch across the stage in *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, or Clybourne finally speaking his love from beneath Reynolds' balcony, the great dramatic moments are larger than life yet perfectly under control. In *Chicago*, now enjoying a third sell-out Sydney season at the Theatre Royal, even the paroxysm is polished and precise.

It is Nancy Hayes' and Geraldine Turner's show they carry it through with an exuberance, compelling energy. Terence Donovan and George Spanos (Mr Collephant) both steal their share of attention with their palpable enthusiasm; the supporting company is superbly well-drilled, with not an ounce feather out of place.

My one reservation about *Chicago* was that the very precision which held it together seemed to have undermined its spontaneity. Each audience has the right to feel that the unexpected could happen, that the performance is truly live and unpredictable. This is a somewhat charitable point after a hundred or so performances, it must be hard to do anything new. But there were a few moments when this festive production seemed in some danger of becoming bland. *Chicago* is not just

another random musical, but an interesting and contentious critique of a newspaper-dominated society, and the spirit should not be allowed to overwhelm the music.

Sixties Street Fair, which is presented on a national tour by Michael Edgley, is not live, but taped, and not up to Edgley's usual high standard.

The voices of the familiar characters from the TV series, Big Bird, Cookie monster, Oscar the Grouch, the Counting Count, etc., were all perfectly authentic, emanating as they did from the original and apparently unmodified American tape. The Australian cast carried and danced their way through it with considerable determination, but the production still seemed very pre-packaged. If the audience laughed longer than allowed at a joke, the next line was aingly drowned.

It was uncanny like watching a live TV screen. The children in the audience certainly seemed to enjoy themselves, but overall the production was disappointingly uninteresting.

More traditional pantomime fare came from the National Theatre, in the shape of their splendid children's play performed on Clark Island in Sydney Harbour, *Richard Tukoo's The Cooks of Bungaro* directed by Chris Johnson.

From the departure of the ferry boat



Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Richard Wherrett. M. Hayes, J. D. Bell, C. and T. M. Whalen, A. and P. C. L. Bond, C. J. Dale, K. Webb-Yule

from the Opera House stage, with actors and audience about it was a jolly romp, a joyous to a place of myth, table and chairs totally suspended disbelief.

Paul Bernon, still remembered from Norma Foss's Clark Island offering *Private at the Zoo* (1982) here repudiated his success. He has the happy and unusual knack of making both children and adults laugh at the same time, at different jokes; he is a master of the aside. At the Victorian cricketers, Sir Sydney Harbour, his every step is vigorously and desperately lived and boozed by the young audience. Sir Sydney is forced to chase the brave Cocky Boorrie (Marian Vaughan) out of the property he has warmed and shamed over those forty years.

Help arrives in the shape of the principal boy, Flash Jacqueline from Gundagai, the fassen sharing shade the side of the rabbit-proof fence, the only one capable of shearing Cocky's sheep in time to thwart Sir Sydney's plot and save the farm. There is some glorious clowning from Tony Taylor as a Scottish emporeror of almost anything. Circie Skinner as Queenie Ed, who is a greg mixture of equal hypocrisies/bacon and ham. Warren Coleman as a good-book constable and Tony Sheldon as Gerald the Clever Sheep.

It is a marvelously tale, cleverly concocted, with a sound, workable plot and a stack of theatrical tricks to please the kids. *The Cods*, of course, is an excellent introduction to live theatre.

Bennett's final production of last year were two highly ambitious musical works which ultimately failed to live up to expectations.

Upstair was the first Australian performance of a play by Oskar von Horvath (1902-1938), an Austria-Hungarian playwright of the 1920s whose work deserves considerable attention in Europe. This was the monastic titled *Faust from The Forest Woods* directed by Anthony Miller.

Horvath's voice is a tragic and disturbing one, a Kafka-esque cry of agonized despair as the priest goes down that oil trap and the hell tortures begin. The play, in Christopher Hampson's somewhat coloristic translation, has a number of brilliant moments of black comedy, a comment on the human nature under stress, and a capacious view of the common hypocrisies and prisoned by people motivated by need or greed.

Despite excellent work from Bennett's regular company and a panoply of gods, for me the play failed intellectually because no clear statement on the issues it was purporting to discuss. There was no continuing thread to link the sketches.

Hovath, a homesick refugee from Hitler's Germany, was killed in 1938 by a falling meteorite on the Champs Elysées in Paris, after a clairvoyant had told him to go there for "the greatest adventure of his



Barrymore, Bernon, Skinner, Coleman and Sheldon in *The Cods* (Chicago)

life". Had he lived, Horvath would have enjoyed his more *Tales from the Forest Woods* in an intriguing, if jumbled study of the darker events and vagueness of Faust.

Downstairs at Her Majesty was an even more disorganized collection of revue items and party tricks, presented by the Women and Theatre group apparently as an end-of-term treat to themselves, but *Bravo Friends*, like the Upstairs play, suffered from coherent, containing absent of thought, with the result that the talents of the cast were by no means fully employed.

Incoherence was also the major failing of the On/Off Theatre Company's first presentation of the year at the Stables, *Cheeky Devil*. The writer, Grant Fraser, was responsible for some of the best new plays of last year, *Sex and the Single Transgender*, also put on by the Griffins.

Cheeky Devil is angrier and less amusing, as well as narrower in focus. Set a decade hence, it examines sex, drugs and rock'n'roll as compensation for living in expectation of the next big bomb and trade off three writing. The musical analogy is maintained throughout and the use of pop songs from different ages is at times pointedly expensive.

Sex and the Single Transgender was episodic, a series of sharp vignettes. *Cheeky Devil* is also structurally immature

without the substance of the earlier play. These limitations of plot and characterisation either obscure what the writer is trying to say or allow it to be dismissed. The production was an inauspicious start to some fine singing from Penny Cook, an intense performance from Ben Franklin and a very nice from Rosemarie Lantz. The show is presented with the Griffins' customary energy and enthusiasm, but there is more promise than achievement here, a deservingly encouraging sign.



Strains of war

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN

THE LONDON BLITZ SHOW

by Jeremy Ridgman

Mother Courage and Her Children by Bertolt Brecht
Dir: Michael T. Bryant. Brudenell Qld. Opened
November 11, 1981.
Drama. Bryan Nissen, Gérard Bell, Jessie Madson,
Carmen Miles Bridges, Michael Davies, John Bush,
Colin Andrew Blackidge, Judith Anderson, Paul
Hodges, Peter Warlow, Greg Park, David Potts, David
de Neal, Sean Shan, Frances Hodge, John Stevenson,
Brett Douglas, David Polson, Stephen Whittaker, John
Bush
(Photographs)

The London Blitz Show by Frank Marley and Jimmy
Li-Bow. Western Qld. Opened December 1981.
Drama. Robert Arthurs. Director: Maggie
Henderson.
Cast: Peter Darch, Michael Gould, Julie Hayes, James Potts,
Hugh Travers, Linda Evans.
(Photographs)

It has been a good year for the TV Company. They have managed to strike a balance between innovation and familiarity that has kept audiences coming back for more, helped them to take risks like *Spartacus* in their stride and established them as a reputable and dedicated ensemble. All that despite not having a home to call their own, though perhaps the TV's romantic content has become part of their attraction, engendering an image of raffish artesian bohemianism.

Mother Courage is an excellent choice for the end of an artistic year, a fitting place for the company and a full-blooded experience for their audience. It is probably the company's most satisfactory production this year, well put together and with more than a few inspired moments.

It is difficult to find fault with Bryan Nissen's view concerning the play's continuing relevance, but the premise that it is all the more pertinent for having been written at a time when war was the art, I find reductive. In an important sense, the play is not about war but about capitalism, for which war serves as an metaphor; war, for Brecht, was capitalism with the gloves off, a way of life to which all and sundry adapt, bringing their human instincts and collaborating, apparently, with the class mentality in the pursuit of economic survival.

The decision to suggest, through modified colloquialism, none added

modifications and, more importantly, updated uniforms, a First World War setting, obviously has strong associations for an audience and makes the experience of the action immediate, but on the metaphorical level it is less satisfactory. What seems important about the Thirty Years War for Brecht is precisely that it lasted, on and off, for thirty years creating for a generation and half a continent a way of life for an Australian audience, the Great War was perhaps too much "over there" and lacked that immediate sense of perpetuity. Moreover, given that Nixon's use of the American image seems intended to work more on a propagandistic than a dramatic level, an "old" rather than meaning, seems a pity that the visual impact was not carried through into the decor, which in the studio space of the Woodward Theatre was in fact negligible. One worked for a sense of landscape upon which the narrative structure of the play incongruously depended, reference perhaps to the passage of Dryden's might have filled the vacuum. The

lived-in costumes and authenticity of such business as the Cook's preparation of meat incised, as Brecht demanded, the skin to the bones of the bit against the polished parquet floor and apologetically turned up black walls of the Woodward, looked faintly ridiculous.

A rather sober pace and direct use of details from Brecht's model book suggested a rather over-differential approach to the action itself, and I found aggravating the calculated and slightly prosaic air of a like dressing room, complete with mirror and lights, behind a screen. The vulgar Brechtianism of which was accentuated by the fact that for the most part the actors chose to change their costumes elsewhere, out of sight, and that the lights in this "dressing room" were often dimmed to complement no effect in the main acting areas.

John Bush's arrangement of Chorus and his own occasional compositions gave life to the performance, as did the central performances, which were all too patently in a higher league than those of the supporting cast. Laurence Hodge brought a subtle complexity to the Chorus and Judith Anderson's Kattrin, the audience's second pair of eyes as it were, was superb, rising to a stirring climax with her martyred death. Errol O'Neill, actor of intelligence and rough-hewn robustness, was perfect as the Cook and his early scenes with Courage among the best. Ianster Blackidge succeeded in conveying the hardened, gritty determination of Courage, but occasionally it felt the performance was dominated by technique. The chunky staccato and physicality in Blackidge's reading of the role however sometimes bordered on campiness, images of pride and suffering and the final rendering of "Look Alive", combined with the patable yet significant effort of at last putting that naughty girl on her own, was unforgettable.

One is also the order of the day in Li-Bow's Christmas family fable, *The London Blitz Show*, a nostalgic trip into the world of Fury Lynn and other such which attempts to pass itself off as a sort of musical People's War Inwhain, hope, meant to be ironic ending, the blithe song goes suddenly come over all political and look forward to building a socialist utopia out of both the roses and the working-class solidarity of warms. Unfortunately, Frank Marley and Jeremy Ridgman, while *Fury* *Lynn* is a far less pretentious and more tuneful minor musical, lack the control over their subject matter to make their intentions clear. There is a good sketch about an amateurish, pretentious amateur footballer on a snobby aristocratic family and an hilarious mixed-link Sports routine, but otherwise nothing much you wouldn't get from a \$3.99 special ticket, and this can hardly be expected to be much more than lovable, plucks audience, Rayn Ford goes one better and exhibits real style and a great voice.



S.A.

Large concerns, many cares

THE SAD SONGS OF ANNIE SANDO

by Guy Warby

The Sad Songs of Annie Sando by Dennis Clarke. Stage Works Company Playhouse, Adelaide SA. Opened November 20, 1981.
Director: Margaret Davis; Designer: Stephen Curtis;
Costume: Christine Woodland; Sound: McCrory; Angels Phillips; Sets: Kirk (Production)

Statistics say that upwards of 100 000 women and children will seek refuge in Women's shelters throughout Australia this year. It was the same last year and, no doubt, the year before that. Statistics say that every week children are abducted by an approved or unapproved parent (usually the father) and sprung instantaneously across Organisations like DAWWA and FORCIL can for the sole purpose of fighting child custody orders. Nobody wins this little war.

Were Annie and John Sandy "real" they would just be part of the statistics. Their abdicated child would become another in the endless cycle of violence and retribution. She would be another potential victim of rape, mental torture, desperation and depression were she to live long enough to marry and have kids of her own. Dennis Clarke has given a pernicious life, a sentence and something of a context to what has remained for too long an anonymous problem.

It is indeed the anonymity — the loneliness and loss of identity — which makes its mark in this production. The very need to hide, to shelter, to protect, governs all other action. "What is your name? My name is Annie Sando" sings a spirit Annie, over and over again in a lullaby which takes her back to a childhood memory of desolation, past the shades of infidelity, desperation, indifference and humiliation. "Who am I and where do I belong?" are questions which all Clarke's characters ask in different ways. Take Nell, for example.

Nell Tamburlin factors in Annie on the shelter to which they have both fled after being beaten over too often by their husbands. Heron's "face it all", "that's the way the world is" toughness and cynicism which hides the residual doubt. "Do I deserve to be left?" Annie and John, Nell



Angele Phillips as Nell, 3rd in 'The Sad Songs of Annie Sando'. Photo: David Wilson

and her husband, are all evidence of the same role-dominated and fixated perception of the way this society operates.

And John Sando — the banker the banker — in his outside world is a small "grey" man, who wears someone else's name on his overalls. Swinging dancelously between baby and baby he waits for the push, the trigger, which will send him to the brink of desperation and homicide. Invariably it will be Annie, however, cowering, who takes the punishment.

The Sad Songs Of Annie Sando, then, is a play with large concepts and many cast. The attempt to balance the notes with the small but vital details is not always successful, either in the writing or the shaping of the piece in performance. The director, by Margaret Davis, undoubtedly responds to the best writing, but fails to unify the piece. Ms Davis has in some parts found social psychological depth and subtlety, and her timing of the final scenes in the first half is spot on. But there are moments when the production is overacted and mawkishness — in the kinder-pepper abomination, for example, which marks the crescendo of the second half. There is a giddiness about the play's structure which demands its production equivalent. There are times too when the Poor Theatre refuses to behave like the fully equipped Playhouse and some changes, rearrangements and establishing moments need some more road-mapping design and performance convention than a scuffle and screech of light.

When it works, however, it works very well. The final shelter scene between Annie (Christine Woodland), Nell (Angele Phillips) and John (Robert Kirk) is excellent, as are the latter half exchanges between Nell and Annie as they attempt to live together in a run down Commonwealth flat. It is, in fact, the presence of Nell and the performance of Angele Phillips which gives the highpoints their status. Ms Phillips has a firecracker energy and a marvelous sense of comic, three-away timing which integrates Nell's rough-and-humble character with her great vulnerability. This is a sweet interpretation, in the best sense of the word.

The play needs a male character as strongly written as Nell to provide Annie with the kind of dramatic rebound she requires to release her full potential. Stuart McCrory has done quite a lot I think, to extrapolate a range of emotional states into the first scene between John and Annie, but there is still something lacking here which precludes the chances for character development later.

As Annie, Christine Woodland sings a sad song. Worried, illiberal, eventually assertive, she holds tightly to the diminishing cause of a flagging world. The sky ends, the oblique planes, and the sheer physical effort of pushing the character past the barriers and complaints of infidelity make her Annie Sando an memorable as we see at the central character in Don Cheadle's forthcoming documentary *Who Killed Jerry Lacy?*

Soft centres and hard edges

MELBOURNE ROUND-UP

by Suzanne Spurrer

For the close of 1981, theatre in Melbourne was still at the centre, with MTC dominated by festive forth. At the Athenaeum, Ben Tavener's *Four & Twenty* in the Nest rated some drollish chuckles with a lacklustre production only relieved by measured performances by Baba McMillan as the upperclass matriarch, and Anne Phelan as the unloving village idiot. While *Rockhouse* had a return season update, Frank Thring rated at Russell Street. Thring's creating a resurgence had some original appeal until historical dissection but was like too long and tedious. At Her Majesty's, John Ye Pester's *The Song* continued and continued like a stuck record.

The Playbox was given over to two productions by St Martin's Youth Theatre. *When Lions Collide* by Michael MacLennan and Helmut Bakaitis played in the larger downtown theatre. It took Australian cultural heroes and heroes drawn indiscriminately from, it can be right and the left, at least the adherents and the capable — Terry Venables and Sir Bruce Small to name one success and added an offbeat quirkiness of intercessions — Eva Peron, Henry Kissinger and Mother Courage and then had the Bakaitis lead them in an Anti-Band Progress Parade. Some 25 young and talented performers were directed in a style of formation acting so tight it made The Nuremberg Rally and *Amadeus* look undignified. Despite the over-determination of Bakaitis' direction, Gina Riley's Ira, Kristie Goss's Daddy and Mark Treloar's Manning Clarke shone.

In the smaller upstairs theatre, MacLennan directed *The Fox* — a Temporal Thesp by young writer, Andrew Macpherson with a selected all male cast straight out of the men's section in *Foxfire*. The play suggested Power and Andy Hubbard, and the stark and chill staging allowed the menace implicit in the writing, but escaped the subtleties. Both productions were camp and distractingly maudlin but had an unequivocal style.

The Play's final last production was Matthew Truscott's rock opera *Sister Love* by Neil Giles and Alison

Richards. It traced the rise and falls of a singularly interesting punk performer and brittle, it never really left the ground but it made a lot of noise though.

At Arbutus Arbutus made a return season in French and Armenian, a minor group under Chris Deboni director staged two original pieces *Fruitful Bed* and *Bosom*, an adaption of 4 Sorcerous Novelty Plays. In original form at La Mama, *Fruitful Bed* was beginning in its rough currency, but

Bosom suffered from a tedious subtlety and a stage cluttered with unnecessary unneeded items. Had it been pared down to the three main characters and their environment abstracted, it could have worked superbly, for the scenes between Iliaach (Raselyn Sedgwick), Stanley (Paul Stoddell) and Stella (Pamela Ward) simmered with more electric intensity. There seemed little point in making a silent film — the power of music is not in static words, but to release



MV - Franklin Thring Photo David Parker

them irrelevant. Meanwhile, theatre restaurants prospered with original shows playing at The Comedy Cafè, The Brown Lounge, The Flying Trapeze and La Joke at The Last Laugh. The most interesting and innovative theatre occurred at the edges — in the new Contemporary Performance Centre, at La Manzana Zoo Studio, while popular theater drew large audiences in provincial centres.

MAHAGONNY

Mahagonny by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. Zoo Theatre, Contemporary Performance Centre, New Haven. Opened November 24, 1981.

Conceived and Directed: Geoff Hocke. Producer: John Mills. Musical Director: Bruce Mordell. Stephen Kramer.

Cast: Ian Walker Hawley, Ruth Schenckelberg, Neil Gladwin, Stephen Kramer, Bruce Mordell, Jerry Foster, Bill Hess, Pamela Higgins, Bill Turner. (Projections)

Over the past 18 months, Geoff Hocke has gained a considerable reputation as a director of lyrical theatrical theatre. His company, Zoo Theatre, brings together performers drawn largely from the John Cage/Bertrand Russell restoration crowd including Steve Kominsky and Ned Glashan from Los Tramp Branghaires. Hocke's aim was, "to make art, spectacle and entertainment happen together". The venue was now a converted church, and the vehicle old-Brecht-Weill's 1930 opera, *Mahagonny*. Hocke had neatly recorded in the bright, complex score of contemporary rock, the production pivoted on a series of propositions about civilisation, class, nature and justice put in the dialectic mode.

In other plays Brecht has shaped his argument better, but the power of *Mahagonny* has always been with Weill's music and the songs, and Hocke's return had similar strengths and weaknesses. The songs and the singing-singing of Ruth Schenckelberg as Jenny and Bruce Mordell as Jimmy were moving — hard, roundly ironic and poignant. Schenckelberg's version of "The Alabama Song" and Mordell's superb horn playing and voice on "When You're A Stranger in the City" made even the ear-splitting louder unbearable. The entrepreneurial agents, Tunney Mover and Lencoda Beagle, who build and rule the city of Mahagonny are only matched by Brecht and Hocke's casting of Neil Gladwin and Ian Walker-Hawley, superbly distorted men by the searing visual effect of their physical colour, thus their ability to command a performance. Gladwin was incisive and wryly evil while Walker-Hawley postured and declaimed without controlling attention. Their performances in Brecht's unusually lucid court scenes made Juno's trial and death sentence more plausible



Bruce Mordell and Neil Gladwin in *Mahagonny*. Photo: Jeff Bush

than the hirsute and ugly tragedy it could have been.

Hocke's aesthetic is brutal modernism — twisted scaffolding towers like the burning ghias dominated the acting area, and beneath them the acro-singer performed on wooden pallets manoeuvred into position on fork lifts by a precision stage manager, electrical wires connected to instruments, microphones, lights and a slide projector made a web of noise, which created a life support system that both released and trapped the actors' power of movement and vocal projection.

The production had white faces and wore the kind of clothes respectable parents might have worn in the fifties, and they moved between scenes like semi-nudity. In addition to Schenckelberg and Mordell's voices, performances, Sarge Kazanay as Billy with his Buster Keaton smile, mask face and maniacal drumming and Chrys Turner as The Speaker with her Alice in Wonderland innocence and her demented Esauin child clarity contributed to the haunting feel and the moments of tragic stillness that so characterised the production.

MANSFIELD STARK

Mansfield Stark by Peter King. Adaptation for the stage from the novels of Katherine Mansfield — Directed by Alan MacNaughtan — At the Bay — La Mama, Carlton, transferred to the Studio Theatre Opened November 20, 1981
Drama — Peter King
Cast: David Kendall, Rob McElmurry, Julian Murray and Meredith Rogers.

As both the BBC series and Cathy Downs' show proved, Katherine Mansfield's short stories are uniquely amenable to dramatic adaptation. In *Mansfield Stark*, Peter King included material from two of Mansfield's best known and most autobiographical stories, "At The Bay" and "Prelude", as well as the lesser known pieces, "Psychology" and "Germans At Meats". King's treatment opened up the dramatic narrative bypassing into dialogue both characters' thoughts and authorial comment. This allowed for a richer less naturalistic performance style while it maintained and accentuated Mansfield's voice.

The production assumed a knowledge of Mansfield's work similar as one needed to be aware that there was no literal connection between the three pieces. Staged with a minimum of props and only indications of costume on a flat, house-like stage, *Mansfield Stark* relied on the invention of its actors — David Kendall, Rob McElmurry, Julian Murray and Meredith Rogers.

Each piece had a distinct and different feel. "At The Bay" used transformational performance to create the various sub-worlds surrounding the Russell household — parents, children, neighbours and servants. "Psychology" was darker and more Symbolic in its delineation of the failure of an intellectual approach to love, while "Germans At Meats", a breakfast encounter between a garrily patriotic Englishwoman and a sardonic Teutonic digester, was for full-on comic mayhem in the manner of Brooks Atkinson or Charles Givens Goldfarb.

The performances were present, subtle and immediate, and at the four actors played more than twenty parts between them, individual careers are difficult to rank above the strong ensemble work. However Julian Murray and Rob McElmurry stand out in "At The Bay" as surely as Meredith Rogers and David Kendall do in "Psychology", and as all did in the hilarious "Germans At Meats". In "At The Bay" the adherents that arose through multiple playing created resonance with the promotional theme of the piece. It vi

Julian Murray played both Linda Burnett, the young woman yearning for a fulfillment greater than that provided by her husband and four children, and Linda's sister-in-law Beryl who suffers of a parasitic lover, as well as Linda's daughter, Karen, the sensitive little girl on the brink of some darker adult awareness.

While Rob McElmurry was equally credible as the youngest daughter, Louise, as he was as Harry Kempler the bistro and ageing man of the bay. In "Psychology", Meredith Rogers and David Kendall created an intense and painfully lonely duo as the couple unable to declare their feelings and dispel all in a rancid and sterile discussion of the importance of the psychological novel.

King's direction was inventive and evocative, building delicate, unusual images and underlining them with moments of passing perception and crackling wit, as indeed Mansfield does herself!

THREE MASQUERADEERS

Three Masqueradeers — The Bay — The Merry-Go-Round Person — "The Old Woman At The Window" — La Mama, Carlton, Opened November 26, 1981
Directed and Performed by Elizabeth Paterson, Scenery: Jim Kelly.

Elizabeth Paterson's "masqueradees" encompass theater, performance art, soft sculpture and a hybrid of mask and puppetry. Her impersonation of the Verdi masquerade of Nanna who covers themselves completely in cloth and create both a character and an environment.

Since finishing the VCA drama course in

1979, Paterson has created four such masquerades — "The Cle Person", "The Old Woman At The Window", "The Sea Fox" and "The Merry-Go-Round Person" — making the costumes, writing the songs and performing the piece solo. The first three pieces were shown at La Mama last year. Since then Paterson has been working with director Jenny Kamp and the has refined in considerable rewriting and reworking of "The Old Woman At The Window" and "The 9 To 5", as well as the development of "The Merry-Go-Round Person" through improvisation.

"The Merry-Go-Round Person" marks a departure in Paterson's work; she is no longer completely covered by the costume but rather wears the merry-go-round as a hat and departs from the pockets of her dress the weird little characters she puts to task on. Whereas in "The Old Woman At The Window", Paterson is completely covered by a starched cloth, glove-like mask, and in turn dressed in the windowwearer's clothes from which she surveys the world and comments on the affairs of her family by way of the lantern and photos she takes from the drawers of the chest. And in "The 9 To 5", she is the central "idiotomy" of a group of seven frayed married women — mat-hour shagglers and consumers who gross in on her with every move she makes.

The main difference between the first La Mama show and that, is a move toward self-realisation, both in the unfolding of the performers, and in the increasing use of autobiographical and personal fantasy in the imagery and writing. Kamp's work with Paterson has sharpened the performances overall and led to a more direct relationship with the audience, with the rough that the work now seems more at home in a theatre than a gallery.



Elizabeth Paterson in *The Merry-Go-Round Person* as Three Masqueradeers. Photo: Jeff Banks

W.A.

A flourish of desperation

by Margaret Lake

DEMOLITION JOB COURT NAPPING SOMETHING FUNNY HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM GASLIGHT

Court Napping: Hilton the Wolf Theatre Perth Opened 20 May 1981

Original created by James Braun, Alan Cudlitz, Ivan King, Colleen McKeown, Roger McRae, Anne Myles and Jean Ryker

Director: Edgar Mitchell; Design: William Dowd; Cast: James Braun, Colleen McKeown, Anne Myles, Jean Ryker; Drama Fellowship at the year's Professional

Stage Book: Thomas Nathan; Music: Charles Strickland; Stage Master: Charles Higginson; Theatre: Perth Opened December 1 1981

Director: Stephen King; Design: Steve Parker; Musical Director: David Bond; Choreography: Karen Johnson; Cast: Alison McLean or Elizabeth Woods, Mrs. Harrigan (Bill Ferriance with Terry Johnson), James Braun, John Maitland, Karen Johnson, Diana Hartnett, Helen Hinchliffe, Raymond Davies; Professional

Design by Patrick Hamilton; Production Stage: Alan Ashton; Conductor: Michael D'Amato; 1981

Dramaturg: Jay Walsh; Original: Alan Murphy; Cast: Helen Hinchliffe, Andy King, Pauline Low, June Pritchard, Paul McQuarrie; Drama Fellowship at the year's Professional

Desertion Job: Hilton the Wolf, Perth Opened October 27 1981; Director: Edga Mitchell; Design: Kate Hartfield; Cast: Andy King, Peter Hanly, Christopher Jellicoe; Professional

A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum: Higginson's Perth; Director: James McNaught; Cast: Neil Purvis, Murray Ogden, Jamie Smith, James Cox, Lynne Collier, James Braun, Ben Haworth; Professional

In Perth, 1981 ended with a flourish of desperation. Theatres were battling for their existence, and audiences were given, if not broad, at least lavish quantities of mirth.

Two big reasons: a sultry reprise, a Victorian thriller and a visit from Super dame Edna. And — yet — there was a smorg of just as well that was *Desertion Job*, and also a brave new venture in University-based theatre.

When Gordon Graham's *Desertion Job* started in the Holf, there were fears that the

title might prove prophetic: the theatre was one of the Dismissed Eight victims of the federal funding cuts. Meanwhile, thimbles started to ping-pong-fall with the WA Arts Council, and then to federal governments, the future looks more promising.

It would have been hard to find a play that illustrated the value of the Holf better than *Desertion Job*. The theatre is small enough to take chances with both new playwrights and actors (here it did both) and yet it's big enough to make an impact. The play wasn't really a risk — it came well recommended — but Best Play Awards don't necessarily filter through to potential audiences. The play had to prove itself, and Edgar Mitchell gave in the production a deserved table of interpretation of character, lively in its inventiveness, and convincingly explosive when the well-established tensions broke loose.

Andy King was fast-race at the no-hoper with a chip on his shoulder — countenance feeding a sort of bullied, grained superiority. His marvellous contrast was Peter Hanly as the other worker — inherently good-humoured, and, sensing drama when the two old school "mates" meet, unexpectedly, along his curmudgeon beat to stir up the action. Christopher Jellicoe, in his first professional appearance after a student theatre background, provided a thoughtful and sympathetic study of the sensitive victim.

And then came the silly season. The Holf celebrated — with an entertainment resoundingly dedicated to outgunning Fremantle's Charles Court, entitled *Court Napping*, a was very much a surferly reverie style, but better in overall quality.

With material written by the local theatre university (and seriously) it was

predictable that much of the satire would be aimed at political phoniness, cultural poverty and West Australian sexism, though Edgar Mitchell, who shaped and directed the show, had already judged how much "nauseous" material could be tolerated.

Desrately the most inventive, and certainly the funniest, was a severely budget-cut version of *West End Peace* performed by one actor and one stage manager with the aid of some cardboard shells (horses), a matchbox (for burning Moscow) and a seemingly endless assortment of maps and handgear representing a cast of thousands. With a lineup like that, who needs hands anyway?

Joan Sylcox also scored a personal triumph with one of the few wacky moments of the show — an updated version of "Dinner Bell".

At the showplace His Majesty's two audience pleasers followed each other in rapid succession:

Something Funny Happened On The Way To The Forum always seems to invite long title as an attention-grabbing device, as though omission of its appeal as a popular musical. The basic idea of an amateurish Rosencratz & Guildenstern seems off the breezy bypass, but the story development in the second half flagrantly Achoo. Also, of course, Stephen Sondheim's peculiar blend of music alternately tuneful and groovy, sets up its own problems. It is now fashionable to praise his last narrative song extravagantly in the name belief that monotony and discord equals greatness, but audiences for musicals don't know about that.)

Jenny McNaught, director, weds commitment on imaginative comedy routes,



Desertion Job at the Holf in Perth



The Music Man's "Singing

as the cast, on the whole, was stronger on acting than on singing. Both the sight-gags in the first half, and the breathless multi-character chase at the end were handled with great skill. The costumes and production impeccably James Braxton's *Hysterical Ecstacy* — the longueurs came mainly with the songs, where the banal exceptions were the solo by Dorothy (Dorothy Valiente) and Maurice Ogden as Svenus, leading what turned out to be the highlight of the show. "Everybody ought to hire a Mind!"

Noel Ferrier as the star Prologue/Pseudophiles relied heavily (!) on his own persona and the audience clearly loved him.

As You're a different kettle of fish (Even though, except for "Tomorrow" and "Stay Sweet", the songs go in one ear and out the other, the whole thing moves at a tremendous pace, is polished and witty, and was intelligently cast). The people who were supposed to sing, sang and although Bill Perryman played the notorious Miss Hannigan even more giddily than one remembered her from the Melbourne production, she was still memorable and Kevin Johnston did display that unique and dainty style of dancing remembered as far back as the great musicals of the thirties.

The kids were beautifully rehearsed and personable, and the Annex room itself a

match for those Faerie States counterparts. Edgell McCallie gave Daddy Warbucks an attractively quizzical touch of irony, and Raymond Dague was superbly sly at FDR. A special joy was Terry Johnson as Grace Farrell, the secretary — one of the few singers around who seems equally at home in opera and musical.

The production as a whole was one of the best things one remembers from Stephen Barry.

While "The National Theatre at the Playhouse" was presenting *Dinner at His Majesty's Theatre*, the Playhouse itself was being put to good use by an enterprising group of action who, rather than facing a "tiring period", decided to form themselves into the WA Action Co-operative, and without subsidy or other safety-net put on *Patricia Hamilton's* energetic thriller *GetOut*, directed by Jay Walsh.

Alan Murphy's nicely apposite Victorian room with huge gas light centre stage, created the right atmosphere. Andy King made a chillingly sadistic villain (the fact that he was a murderer justified his less frightening than his icy calculated sexual cruelty), whilst Helen Trapp was a successfully horrifically pathetic vulnerability and twisted hysteria. (Were Victorian women really driven to these extremes, one wonders?) There was a nicely anomalous goody detective, played by Phil

Wilkinson, a performed by Polly Low, and Jenny Vallici was wasted in the part of sympathetic housekeeper.

Another new Company was the University-based La Barnes La Segunda Company, directed by Cliff Gillett. Despite the pretentious title inspired by Federico Garcia Lorca, the company showed plenty of verve with a rather strangely assorted group of plays.

Before interval there were two one-acters by Ayckbourn (*Cousinucous*) and Alan Owen (*Wives*), whereas the second half was entirely devoted to Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *Breve en el desierto*.

The long play was masterfully exhilarating. Lorca's blood imagery was here mixed with satire and sad humour, and the audience was given ample scope to interpret and interpret the symbols of this tale about an aging dominatrix who carries on. Tim Wilson as Don Periplaneta was both funny and moving — he has appeared in a number of university productions and is clearly someone to be watched.

All too often student theatre restricts itself either to safe productions related to the year's English syllabus, or to shocking the Establishment, and it was refreshing to find a group with an approach that was neither dryly academic nor slavishly trendy. May the string of their successes be as long as their reign!

Theatre Guide

ACT

THEATRE ACT

Playhouse (0964881) *On Our Selection* adapted by George Whaley, director, George Whaley Starts Feb 20 For entries contact Janet Hinley on 494759

NSW

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (0286807)

Black Ball Game by Don Webb, director, Don Reid; designer, Warren Field Starts Feb 4

GENESIAN THEATRE (0662326)

Measure by William Shakespeare, director, Ray Autonove Starts Feb 5

GRUFFIN THEATRE COMPANY (338817)

Shakes Theatre *Cheek Thrills* by Grant Pearce, designer, Jack Roche Starts Feb 6 New production starts mid Feb

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (09828828)

I Am Work by John O'Donoghue, director, Anne Neeme; music, Allan McFadden, with entire HVTC company and Vic Rooney. Return of the highly successful Newcastle drama. Feb 1-6, 12 and 13.

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (0214115)

The Successor Show, producer, Bill Young, with Zon Bertram, Paul Bertram and Marge McCauley. Throughout Feb

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (0983168)

Mabel The Butter Cow by Jim Orion, director, John Wilson, with Ron Fazio, John Bruce, Reg Gillies and Simon Duke. One of Orion's masterpieces about sanity and madness. Starts Feb 12

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (0775585)

Have A Ball directed by Peggy Mortimer, director, Peggy Mortimer, with Enzo Toppino, Dean Toppino, Gerry Gallagher, Janet Brown and Peggy Mortimer. Starts Feb 9

NEW THEATRE (0193460)

Flying Blind by Bill Morrison, director, John Tasker; designer, John Pryce Jones. A purely tales about Northern Ireland. Throughout Feb

NIMROD THEATRE (0996003)

Uphears Welcome The Bright World by Stephen Sewell, director, Neil Armfield, designer, Bannon D'Arcy, with Cathy Downes, Michele Freedman, Russell Newman, Barry Otto, Katrina Foster, Max Grimes and Martin Harris. Sewell's latest play about the contradictions of modern, industrial society. Throughout Feb

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (09713000)

Theatres for primary schools and *The Deaf Man In History* for secondary schools, director, Ian Watson. Throughout Feb

THE ROCKS PLAYERS (0990393)

The Philanthropist by Christopher Hampton, director, Frank McNamee. To Feb 20

SEYMOUR CENTRE (0202525)

York Theatre *Eviction* by Ron Eshel, director, Bruce Mylne, with Frederick Parlow, Gary Dowland and Roger Oakley. Starts Feb 4. *Downstairs* *Revolutions* by Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherrin, with David Riesnerwood. Two MTC productions about two greats of the 20th century. To Feb 13

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (3880948)

Weekend workshops include playbuilding, mime, dance, puppetry, design, radio and video. Blacker and Blacker, with Martin Blacker. Feb 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (25558)

Drama Theatre, SOH. *You Can't Take It With You* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, director, Georgie Ogivie, designers, Kristian Fredriksson and Anna French, with Tyler Coppin, John Franklin, Jane Hardens, Jim Kemp, Mengh Li, Tim McKernan, Carol Raye and Geoffrey Rush. Depression-type entertainment? To Feb 13



THEATRE ROYAL (2318111)

Chicago by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse, director, Richard Wherrett, musical director, Peter Casey, with Nancy Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Terry Donovan, Judi Connell, George Spartiates and J P Webster. STC's commanding production returns yet again. Throughout Feb

QLD

ARTS THEATRE (3823044)

The American Agent by Spencer McPherson, director, Gordon Shaw. Premiere of a new comedy by local writer — a spoof on the world of the secret agent. Starts Feb 5. *The Magic Kitchen* by Michael Noonan (children's theatre), director, Lynne Wright. Adventures, complete with villain, of a boy and his dog. Starts Feb 13

LABOITE THEATRE (3616322)

Back To The Cremorne, director and designer, Graeme Johnston. A vaudeville show, reliving the days of Brisbane's old Cremorne Theatre. Starts Dec 10

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (2312881)

SOQ Theatre. *Hello Dolly* by Michael Stewart and Jerry Herman, director, Alan Edwards. Based on Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*. A guilty musical to start the year. Feb 2-20

TN THEATRE COMPANY (0885133)

Twelfth Night Theatre, ASX100 and

Theatre Guide

(continued)

AUSTRALIA
Juliet by William Shakespeare,
 director: Bryan Nason; designers:
 Bryan Nason and David Bell, with
 Geoff Gardner & M. Victoria Arthur and
 Jennifer Blockridge. Shakespeare's
 perennially popular story of a star
 crossed love. Starts Feb 18.
 For tickets contact Jeremy Padgman
 on 3772519.

SA

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE TRUST (3141211)

The Playhouse: *Now Now Darling* by Goorney and Chapman, director: Ray Goorney with Andrew Sachs, Leslie Phillips and Ann Sidney. A laugh a minute farce. To Feb 3.



ADELAIDE REPERTORY THEATRE SOCIETY (0123777)
Arts Theatre: Present Laughter by

Noel Coward, director: Graham Duckett; designer: Geoffrey Ashton. Noel Coward wrote this play for himself — reaching forty but wanting to be the eternal youth. Feb 20-27.

FESTIVAL THEATRE (819121)

Edgley International presents *Barnum* by Bramble, Coleman and Stewart, director: Barry Lee; musical director: Noel Smith; choreographer: Briony Lee; set designer: David Mitchell; lighting designer: Craig Miller, with Reg Livermore. The big musical spectacular of the year based on the life of P.T. Barnum. Plenty of circus tricks and razzamatazz. To Feb 23.

O THEATRE (2235651)

Pride and Prejudice adapted by Betty Burn from Jane Austen's novel, director: Jean Marshall. How to marry off five daughters with only one eligible man in the offing. Starts Feb 27.

VIC

AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE (0383233)

Quasimodo Amphill presents *Illuminated Ducks* by Hazel Barry, director: Elena Eremian. A new Australian play with songs. To Feb 20. With Smartfith and O'Dwyer by Kinney and Lyrne. Starts Feb 24. Downstairs Room by Michael Deutch, director: Marc Adam.

ARENA THEATRE (2401937)

Arena workshops for adults and children start Feb 1.

THE COMEDY CAFE BYO THEATRE RESTAURANT (4162699)

Illustration of Train, written, produced and performed by Mary, Steve, Geoff and Rod. Throughout Feb.

COMEDY THEATRE (0383233)

The Rocky Horror Show by Richard O'Brien, director: Richard Hartley. A creditable revival with Daniel Abutam as Frank'n' Furter. Throughout Feb.

MER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (0383233)

A musical show with Tommy Steele.

HANDSPAN THEATRE (4152978)

Performing at the Adelaide Fringe.



Festival: In schools productions of *The Bunyip at Bakers Creek*; evening productions of *Jandy Malone* and *The Nine O'Clock Tiger*. Starts Feb 24.

LA MAMA (03426055)

Shirley by Paul Custer and company, director: Paul Custer, with Alice Madden and Anna Moore. Wed to Sun for 3 weeks.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (4162623)

International Comedy Festival: The Brass Band just returned from America and Jean Paul Bell from Sydney. Starts Jan 12. The White Party with Captain Rock. Starts Feb 1.





MU SHROOM TROUPE (2787384)
Starts with children's spectacular
Bombora at Alexander Theatre

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (6999122)
Atheneum: *Mirza Von Baxenthal* by
Gotthold Lessing. Adapted by Ray
Lawler, director, Ray Lawler.
designer, Paul Kathner. Starts Feb
10 Russell Street, Victoria by Edna
O'Brien, director, Judith Alexander,
designer, Richard Prins. One-woman
Virginia Woolf show Atheneum 2.
Mance Pearl by David Knight,
director, William Grah, designer
Mark Wager.

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY (6348880)
Playbox at the National Theatre
Steven Berkoff and the London
Theatre Group in *The Fall Of Usher*. Berkoff's stage
production of an Edgar Allan Poe
story from *The Tales Of Mystery and*
Imagination. Starts Feb 24.
Uscars! A Lonely Lenny Letter by
Barry Dickson, director, Reg
Cramphorn, designer Sandra
Mallock. Dickens' ideal comedy-tragedy
on Love.

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (6580277)
Moomba Festival Of Drama starts
Feb 20.
For entries contact Colette Krueger
on 6576448.

WA

ART GALLERY OF WA.

Galleria 3: Lear — The Monologue,
director, David George, with Edgar
Metcalf. An experimental adaptation
of Shakespeare's play, only Lear's
lines are delivered in a landscape of
paintings and within a soundscape
created by an exciting American
musician, Greg Goodman. Feb 27.

CIRCUS Oz

McCallum Park. Feb 7-21.

CIVIC THEATRE RESTAURANT

Joker Chagrin — rubber faced —
combines mime and the spoken word
for an evening of hilarious visual
comedy. Starts Feb 8.

DOLPHIN THEATRE

The Swan River Stage Company
presents *The Dreamers* by Jack
Davis, director, Andrew Ross. The
play examines the life of an
Aboriginal family in the SW of WA
Feb 2, 5, 9, 13, 16 and 20. Matinee Feb
7, 14 and 21.

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

The Black Theatre Of Prague
presents *A Week Of Dreams*. The
programme is like an animal cartoon.

The Black Theatre Of Prague
perform magic and brings
summons onto the stage.
Puccini Teatro Di Milano Italy's most
famous theatre company and
developers of the great Italian theatre
tradition *Commedia dell'Arte*. The
company's legendary Harlequin
Puccini Soleil will introduce each
scene in English. Starts Feb 24.

HOLE IN THE WALL THEATRE

Cloud Nine by Caryl Churchill. A
hilarious and outrageous modern
comedy which delights in absurdity,
sexual conditioning and role playing.
Starts Feb 8.

My Name Is Pablo Picasso by Mary
Geige. A play set in Montmartre
where the young Picasso is living
with his first mistress, La Belle
Fernande, and struggling to make a
name for himself. One night while
Picasso is painting, Fernande, an old
man appears and needs he can

reveal Picasso's future. A late night
show at 10.45pm on Feb
11, 13, 18, 20, 25 and 27.

OCTAGON THEATRE

London Theatre Group presents *Tell-Tale Heart* by Steven Berkoff, *The Fall Of The House Of Usher*, Steven Berkoff and Terry James. An
adaptation of two Edgar Allan Poe
short stories, perfect vehicles for the
Group's style. Feb 4-20.
Miss Marguerite's Way by Roberto
Alfayo, with Estelle Parsons. Starts
Feb 22.



PERTH CONCERT HALL
Robin Archer at Large Feb 23.

NATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY

Playhouse: *The Fields Of侯默* by
Dorothy Hewett, director, Rodney
Fisher. Set in a forbidding district in
the Great Southern area of WA
during the period 1929-1931. It tells
of destructive love and the
annihilation of a fragile ecology in
which the interlocking lives and
conflicting values of the older settlers
and migrants clash causing tragedy
and exile. Starts Feb 9.
For entries contact Margaret Schaeffer
on 2411178.

LYRIC OPERA AT LAST

At long last of yet another year of inaction in Brisbane the newly formed Lyric Opera of Queensland's Consulting Director Anthony Jeffery has announced highlights of the repertory planned for later this year.

A new *Donizetti* is proposed from the internationally acclaimed production/design team of Anthony Beach and John Sheldon who most recently scored a major success with the VSO's *Faust* last year. The planned Queensland production started off life as a possible joint venture with the Victorian but that seems to have fallen by the wayside.

Another opera from the same team — the by now much-travelled SA *Così fan Tutte* — will be revived with John Copley, recently awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours, as director.

After his first directing success with the SA JIMS *Dieci Giorni*, Dennis Glass will produce a new *Lehar* designed by Peter Cooke. There are rumours that the two may be shared interests but no details have been released.

Finally, another operetta, this time of the French school, with Offenbach's *Le Beau Gésier* will complete the lot.

It is an ambitious season for a Delphing company on still too far limited a grant to sustain the level of activity necessary to see it into the twentieth-century. And Cross?

Meanwhile, the hunt for the general manager goes on.

YSO WITHDRAWS RHEINGOLD

Hard on the heels of the announcement of The Australian Opera's Ring cycle, came the news that the YSO had abandoned their earlier plan to commence their own series of productions in late 1982 with *Rheingold*.

Obviously it would have been pleasant to have had two companies sharing many of such momentous undertakings and reason has prevailed.

Then comes a vital complementary role which both companies can play in providing audiences with real breadth of repertoire experience. Let us hope that the rather childish sniping that has characterised so much of their discussions in recent years is over and that both can get down to the most important business of presenting Melbourne with a broad spectrum of quality performances and productions.

NEW SKIPPER TRIMS SAILS?

In a plethora of announcements toward the end of last year, Patrick Yeatman the General Manager of the Australian Opera produced a package of house-clearing actions of interest in the administrative, sales and repertoire areas alike.

The spearheading public is now thoroughly aware that in one more 22 positions in the company were eliminated. It was not 22 characters as one evidently comparable weekly claimed and indeed in a number of cases the positions were either unfilled at the time or the reductions resulted from resignation or a revised administrative and position structure. Heads rolled certainly, but there was a tendency — not entirely encouraged by the Opera's management — to make it sound like a bloodbath. "Five measures being taken".

In an almost move the appointment of Jenny Brett, previously with the Commercial Authority, as Development Administrator is a hopeful sign. It is the first time a woman has held a senior management position in the company and indicates that Yeatman is definitely looking for new energies and perspectives in his

new look administration.

After the cost cuttings came the plans. Advances were given to key repertoire decisions for the next three years of which the Ring to lead off in 1983 is the most outstanding.

An interesting innovation for the company over this period will be semi-staged performances of two masterpieces — *Siegfried* in 1983 and Verdi's *Attila* in 1984. A new production of *L'Elisir d'amore* will appear next year, as well as a partial rechristening of John Copley's 1973 production of *Carlo*.

In all it would appear to represent a breakthrough in planning on a number of fronts and a prevalence of artistic activity which has been all too rare in recent years.

A RESIDENT BRUNHILDE

As part of the flag package, Mr Yeatman also announced that the noted Dutch soprano Rita Hunter will be based in Australia for the next three years.

Miss Hunter is undoubtedly one of the significant Wagnerian singers today and her decision will be welcomed by everyone who has heard her in the last year, whether on the concert platform or in the theatre.



John Copley — rechristened producer of *Lothair* after year



Patrick Keay

AMAZING EVENTS

Opera and the Adelaide Festival

by Justice Macdonnell

With the approach of the eighth Adelaide Festival of Arts later this month, and with all the attendant hoopla of imported productions, companies and individual artists, it is easy to overlook the immensely long and productive contribution which the Festival has made to opera in this country. It is an extraordinary record of achievement in new works, Australian premieres and amazing events which has been chalked up over 22 years. For example, in taking the classification of "opera", which I delineate below, there have, in this period, been 39 Australian premieres of which six have been world premieres. Of these the Australian Opera has been responsible for four; the State Opera of South Australia for six, the Internationale Opera Group for nine, the Festival itself for eight and teaching institutions for two.

In a list as diverse as Janacek, Tippett, Britten, Berg, Wilson, Maxwell Davies and Szyman, the credits read like an encyclopaedia of 20th century opera and it should be remarked that with the sole exceptions of Britten's parlable operas, toured in 1970 by the English Opera Group, and The Force of Louis' presentation of Max Bruch's *Megar*, these productions have been entirely Australian-based.

In concluding this examination I have for consideration of space omitted such things as concert pro-

ductions, selections from operas by various small bodies, amateur operas and G and S productions, but even allowing for that the following statistics of premieres alone are extraordinary:

El�ebethan Trust Opera/Australian Opera Salomé 1960, *Ancrene w' Nuns* 1962, *Troilus and Cressida* 1964, *Foggy and Bone* (in association with the NZ opera) 1966, *The Rape of Lucretia* 1972 and, *Wozzeck* 1976.

Internationale Opera Group. *The Telephone* (Mozart), *The Seedy Hobo*, *A Dancer Engaged* (Berkeley), 1960, *Gentleman's Island* (Horowitz), *La Voix Humaine* (Puccini), *The Private Goods* (Benjamin), 1962, *The Night Bell* (Donizetti), *Three's Company* (Hogarth), 1962, *Master Peter's Puppet Show* (de Fallo), *If The Cap Fits* (Bush), *Suzanne's Secret* (Wolf-Ferrari), 1966, *Seven Years* (Glanchar), *Chambers* (Barbi), 1968, *The Old Maid and the Thief* (Menotti), *I Never Expected You* (Ravel), 1970, *Le Roi Soleil* (Pergolesi), *The Wandering Scholier* (Holst), *The Glittering Gate* (Glanville-Hicks), 1972.

In the earlier years of the Festival under a succession of directors, their musical/theatrical tastes inevitably influenced the choice of work. At that time the AETT Opera took the opportunity to present a number of works of major importance in the repertory and, in as much as it was in the 60's the only significant pro-

fessional opera producing body of scale in the country, it made the running operatically through to the early 70's when with the rise of the SA State Company the balance shifted remarkably the other way — at least to some degree inevitable. The impact which the State Opera productions, especially in 1974, 1978 and 1980, have created make it easy to overlook the range and diversity of the work presented in those early days by the Trust. The 1960 production of Strauss's *Salomé* while not at the time accounted a great success, was at least as sure of a sufficient place at that time when audiences' tastes were very far from being as sophisticated toward the 20th century repertoire as they are today. It was also noteworthy as being one of the last public appearances in Australia of Dame Joan Hammond before her retirement.

At the following Festival another Strauss opera, the almost equally enigmatic *Ancrene w' Nuns*, was presented in a curious production by Charles Hickman. Again the critics were less than enthusiastic, but the medium had been established of productions which were new and interesting in some way being introduced into the repertory and to the awareness of audiences in this country. The first real coup came in 1964 with the Australian premiere of Wilson's remarkable *Troilus and Cressida* which amongst other interesting features starred the late Dame Collier. It was

the first almost completely unknown work to be undertaken not only by the Festival but by the Trust Company itself and received a surprisingly warm and enthusiastic reception from both critics and public at the time though sadly it was not presented elsewhere.

1968 was a year of great turmoil in the Trust Opera Company as a result of financial pressures and the Trust itself undertaken to entrepreneurship a tour of the New Zealand Opera Company's *Fafra und der Wald* with a combined Black American and Mason cast, led by the remarkable talent of Lucia Warta. The production was probably a greater success in Adelaide than elsewhere in the country and filled what would otherwise have been an important gap in the programme that year.

1968 was perhaps the first year when the Elizabethan Opera Company was on anything like the secure footing from which the Australian Opera was ultimately to grow. The Festival housed an impressive line up of these standard repertory pieces: Tosca with Mary Collier, Two Gobbs and Donald Smith; Verdi's *Don Carlos* and Stephan Baird's remarkable production of *Tannhäuser*.

During this period, at quite the opposite end of the spectrum, a small-scaled but, in its own way, no less remarkable achievement was being chalked up in the unique contribution of the Interstate Opera Group. Its history has been well chronicled elsewhere, but bears testament in the context of the Adelaide Festival. Adelaide has always had an important advantage over the other BAPF states in having a strong resident pool of professional singers. This was largely the historical result of two factors: the retention during the early 60's and 70's by the ABC of the Adelaide Singers as a chamber choir of between 12 and 16 adults on a permanent salaried basis and, secondly, the presence of a strong school of singing and opera studies at the Elder Conservatorium. From these two sources were drawn at regular intervals the ensemble which formed the basis for the Interstate Opera Group. They performed in schools, undertook country tours with the Arts Council and gave intermittent city seasons of one act works by leading contemporary composers with a success and during that would be almost incomprehensible today. The



State Opera's *The Emperor of St. Louis*. Photo: Peter Morley



State Opera's *Die Zauberflöte* for the 1969 Festival.



New Opera's *The Luminous Bough of Charles the Last*. (P.M.Jones)

Group had an English Stock Society, who once described herself as "an opera renegade thinly disguised as an establishment lady", a remarkable leader with a taste not so much for the grand warhorses (though she was far from averse to them), but for what one might call the "accessible contemporary" and a note second to none for sniffing them out.

But it was in the biannual Festival that IOG came into its own through being able to muster the forces necessary for more ambitious seasons, again of one-actors, and pack out the many small venues they played. They were to be found in church halls and school auditoriums with names that only Adelaide's curiously evangelical postman-farmer ancestry could devise, until finally coming to rest in the then new AMP theatres. These venues might not always have been the most exquisitely perfect for opera but the standards maintained were high and many a singer now gracing the stages of the Sydney Opera House, the Coliseum, Covent Garden and half a dozen German houses got their break there. The track record of adventurous programmes and catholicity of taste in the works listed previously, speak for themselves.

As a result of this combined programming, through the Festival from the Elizabethan Trust Opera and IOG, Adelaide and visiting audiences were probably exposed to more diverse operatic experiences over that period than in any other city in Australia. It was a tradition that, in music theatre particularly, the Festival has committed to build on. The IOG by the English Opera Group with the Briton's Burning Ferry Farmer, Prokofiev's Son and Corlew River conducted by the composer and starring (if that's the correct expression) Peter Pears, Thomas Hemsley and Benjamin Luxon was a theatrical and operatic revelation, not only at the Australian premiere at the Festival, but on its subsequent national tour. Even in the cruel acoustic and climatically oppressive circumstances of Boxleyton Hall one was aware that an extraordinary event was taking place. The early days of the New Opera (now State Opera) were to some degree consciously modelled on the example — a fate, sadly for a variety of reasons, never to be realised. Operatically it was

one of the key innovations by the Festival up to that point. There followed in 1978 the commissioning by the Festival of Peter Maxwell Davies' *Alas Dovbush's Magier* performed by Mary Thomas and The Five of London which whilst essentially a concert performance was nevertheless a piece of acutely observed and rigorously well-played music drama as Australia had seen up to that time.

1976 followed in a similar vein with the visit of Hans Werner Henze whose remarkable *El Cidmanche* was given, this time with an ensemble recruited from within Australia and featuring the now sadly expatriated talents of Lyndon Terris as the black Hungarian slave.

1974 and 1976 reflect in many ways the key changes that were coming over opera generally in Australia and whilst no one factor alone can account for them, a number combined in Adelaide to create some remarkable developments. With the appointment of Anthony Steel as General Manager of the Adelaide Festival Centre and initially Artistic Advisor to and later Artistic Director of the Festival there was for the first time since John Bishop a director whose personal commitment was to music, especially 20th century music and music theatre.

In as much as during the intervening years between 1972 and 1974 IOG had been transformed into New Opera, his concern in this direction found a willing reception, given the background of that company. The Australian Opera had informed Steel that it would not be available for the Festival that year because of the recent opening of the Sydney Opera House and the commitment to building up its season there in the February/March period. Much to the alarm of his colleagues and the Festival's Board of Governors, Steel turned to the infant State Opera Company — barely six months old — and proposed that they should fill the gap in the recently completed Festival then with Mozart's *Idomeneo*. With the bashfulness that only the newly-born can muster, the company replied that they would prefer to stage Janácek's *Makropulos Case*. Steel immediately said that if it had to be Janácek then it had rather be *The Entomology of Mr Brodsky* which, when the Company replied that it was

not exactly the opera on everybody's lips, Steel, with that combination of aplomb and tenacity which I trust will never desert him, declared that that was "exactly the point". The result, after a series of visualities too numerous to relate, was John Taylor's meteorously effective production and the Festival scored a major triumph. It was not only the first Janácek production in Australia but also the first English language production of the work and one of the few in any language outside its native Czechoslovakia.

In 1976 the reverse was true, the Australian Opera was not only available, but prepared to assemble the forces for another first. Berg's *Wozzeck* introduced to Australian audiences the outstanding talents of Elijah Moschansky, the young Australian producer who had recently created such a sensation with his production of *Peter Grimes* at Covent Garden. It's a nice chance that he will not only direct the State Opera's production of, at long last, *Makropulos Case* in 1982, but has also been announced as Artistic Director for the 1984 Festival.

Again the presence of the Festival Theatre with its extraordinarily wide wing space enabled an almost filmic treatment of the episodic Berg masterpiece and established in Australia Moschansky's reputation as an inventive and daring producer which his subsequent *Wozzeck* at the Berliner Staatsoper and the Australian Opera only endorsed.

Regrettably the very nature of the production with its literally moving trucks could not be accommodated at any other theatres in the country and the resulting telefilm of a failed to capture any of the remarkable clarity and "hard-edgedness" of the stage version.

Meanwhile the State Company under their new Musical Director Myer Freedman played at the much smaller Sam Theatre to a sell-out season of two commissioned Australian pieces Larry Sitsky's *Fairy Tales* and *The Lawless Reign of Charles the Last* by George Dreyfus. Neither enjoyed much critical success although the Sitsky piece merits wider consideration than it received. The Dreyfus work was described by one critic as more a university review than

an opera. Whatever its merits, it touched the raw nerve of sensibilities already exposed by the recent constitutional crisis culminating in the infamous act of November 11th 1975.

Depending on one's lights, it was either the best or the worst of all possible times to reappear Whittier, Duran, the Royal family and other institutions in a somewhat Aristophanic guise on stage. If audiences were bemused by the contributions of both the National and State Opera companies that year, events were to become curiously still in 1978. Reversing the roles once again, the State Opera returned to the Festival Theatre with Tippett's *A Midsummer Marriage* graced by the presence of the composer himself. Myer Fredman's musical direction elucidated the complex — some would be bold enough to say maddening — musicalities in almost exactly inverse proportion to the degree in which Adnan Sayag's production further muddled them. The critics, however, by and large hailed the event as the best thing since Ben Hur.

Mad, however, was not to be the

sole preserve of the State Opera, the Australian Opera's contribution to the Festival was Scarlet's monumentally unmemorable *Tangle of Honour* which I regret to say I recommended for performance by the Australian Opera Studio in its dying days. Looking back to that remarkable English Opera Group season eight years earlier, one was reminded that while the circumstances of the Bonyngham Hall had not noticeably improved, the quality of the presentation in that year had declined. Interestingly, on that point, the next and indeed most recent success operatically of the Festival was a return to Benjamin Britten with *Death in Venice*, which proved a tour de force in every aspect of the art form. Rarely in Australia have we seen the elements of production come so blindingly well together as on that occasion. The deft nuances of Fredman's musical direction together with Jan Sherman's glorified production and Robin Gaird's impeccable reading of Verdi Aschenbach combined to score a major triumph for Australian opera generally and the forces assembled in

Adelaide, in particular. It was a delight to see the long overdue recognition of Mr Gaird, as an exponent of this music certainly second to none in this country, and in the light of the forthcoming film of the opera possibly a force to be reckoned with internationally.

Inevitably, some of these observations on the Adelaide Festival over the years reflect the writer's personal involvement in the events. Moreover, the productions and the details contained by no means comprise an exhaustive account even of the official programme over that period. But even this brief account indicates the richness and diversity which has been made available to Australian audiences through the Festival, or, indeed, most of which could never have happened had for the presence of the Festival itself and the unparalleled enthusiasm for the arts which it engenders every two years.

Long may they reign!

(The writer wishes to thank Judi Davis of Flinders University for assistance in researching this material)

OPERA -REVIEWS



Good comparisons

by Ken Healey

Apart from Canberra Opera's *Asyla*, November marked the end of the operatic year. It proved to be a month suitable for making comparisons. In Adelaide, the State Opera of South Australia was making history with the second-ever production of *A Christmas Carol* in the presence of Scots composer Thom Massmann. At the same time in Melbourne, the Australian Opera had a variety of productions on display at the Princess: the much-anticipated production of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*; Bellini's *Norma* in its first restoration version; Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*, for whom it was originally mounted; and last, but hardly least, the company's most successful production, John Updike's wonderfully funny and stylish production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, with a number of cast changes.

None of the four productions was

disappointing, given reasonable expectations. For instance, *The Merry Widow* in English was shown up for the old-fashioned but trivial pace that it is. By the time it arrived in Melbourne, the production had begun to recover from the surviving hand of the Czech party chief Petravý Koo, who had seemingly won the trip to Sydney for the October opening rather than planned them on artistic grounds.

Now, a little longer in the repertoire, but also visited at its first appearance by its production, is now officially committed to sister bands, those of Christopher Richardson. But it remains a two-woman opera, and all ears were tuned to judge the efforts of Rita Hunter and Rosemary Dunn who took over the roles created by Sutherland and Margot Elliott. Figure, as I had indicated above, was also mostly of interest because of changes in casting.

The positive impact of *A Christmas Carol* in Adelaide is some indication of how well the state company is doing in South Australia. A contemporary opera was playing to full houses. Despite it, of course, a strong selling point, but for my money he is the major drawback to this opera. The avoidable, non-Christmas, Christmas sentimentality of the story hardly stands up to serious musical and dramatic treatment, which is certainly what it got from Musgrave and producer Roger Lovings.

With names like Ebenezer and Jacob, the crosshatched business partners Scrooge and Marley may, for all I care, still have been Jews, and therefore hardly required so horrid a Christmas. Be that as it may, James Christensen so dominated the production as the most unforgettable Scrooge ever to likely to see in any realisation of the story, that all humans not immersed in cynicism went out to hear. As a performer, Christensen has always seemed to me to be best suited to straightforward, almost unaffected characterisation. His nobility was a rare departure.

There were five performances, as expected, from Thomas Edmunds (Bob Cratchit) and a couple of extras, Judith Hartley as Belle Faversham and three tiny roles, and a comic Dame Olave as the Spirit of Christmas Past. Allowed to run in the first act unencumbered by the costumes which qualified his later manifestations, Olave was superb. Karen Lorrise announced the admirably high timbre of Fae that she would surely have scared the young Scrooge out of his wits. The son of Tom Longwood ingeniously suggested all but the final scene, when what was needed was a big enough budget to depict from the all-purpose smash-crash, which had served so admirably to that point.

Dawn Vaughan and a couple of dozen members of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra introduced us to a through-



Anna Christensen as Ebenezer

composed score which impressed me less than the same composer's *Merry Queen of Scots* (based in London in 1988), but which proved to be both singable and genuinely resonant in open spaces go.

In fact, I could go on listing other strengths of this Adelaide production, especially our members such as David Breena, Roger Howell, and soprano Hodgeson. The point is that none of these artists is less accomplished than those who performed the same weight of role for the national company in Melbourne during the same month. Should the audience be shown that the best regional companies (Victoria's *One Penny* and *Fair* might just as validly have been put forward for comparison) have now risen level with the Australian Opera in terms of what one might see and hear in any single night?

The question is carefully phrased. No regional company would now or in the foreseeable future aspire to be able to play within 36 hours the three operas that have in Melbourne from the AD. But, given the importance of a name singer like Rita Hunter, both Victoria and South Australia showed during 1981 that they can compete

with any one of the fine-average-quality standard repertoires at the AD.

I want to pose some potentially embarrassing questions, rather than to offer answers, this month. Does Melbourne want to have all its opera in a concentrated dose? Is the AD serving Australia well by using its resources with an Judith Babs, a ageing Soprano, and employing in the chorus a Chernobyl as alarmingly terrified as Bernadette Colles, not to mention the other three or four choristers with solo roles in *Fair*? Most of these singers did well, but they are much closer to the intended we have come to associate with regional companies than with the national flagships.

Among the visitors to the national company, Clancy Powels was a bewitching Marmalade in *The Sponsored Slave*. Rita Hunter (unfortunately) had her finest moment as Norma at the big duel with Adalgiso, which she and Rosemary Dunn sang with exquisite softness, giving to music and the drama a new dimension. And Marilyn Richardson was beautiful to see and hear as Figaro's Clinton.

The unavoidable question is: Is the enormous expense of keeping the Australian Opera in its present form justified by the compensation provided of production which we saw from it and the best regional companies in 1981?

I certainly enjoyed, say, *Don Pasquale* Faust and *A Christmas Carol* in a totality more than the three operas under review from the AD in Melbourne. How much are we really paying for the occasional incomparable masterpiece of music making and staging which the AD still occasionally presents?

Judged by the standards of good regional opera, all these AD Melbourne productions in November were acceptable. Is that what we should expect? Is that what we should get? I hope that supporters of the state companies in Melbourne and Adelaide realise how quickly they have become truly excellent of their type.

Aida — eventually small was beautiful

By Ken Healey

Canberra Opera's *Aida*, performed twice at the National Indoor Sports Centre and the subject of an ABC broadcast on December 12, was a triumph of smallness in proportions. The proportion of the 4000-seat stadium was so perfectly matched by Peter Cook's Egyptian world of sand that it came as a surprise when great bass Donald Shanks appeared as a diminutive figure in Ramphis to sing the opera's opening phrase

in Bernd Breitbach's production.

Looking tiny in gauzy surroundings it was to itself a visual, even if opera. After a period in which it sounded through all the principals would have been better served by sheet microphones than by singing situated in this vast space, the truth of the "visual-auditory" division was heard towards the end of the first act when all the men and then the women's chorusing.

In an acoustic where no sound bounces back to burnish vocalized ordinations or to impart physical thrill to an audience, every line of a complex musical score became magically audible. After tuning one's ears to the general level of sound it was possible to hear soft singing, especially in the chorus of prisoners, as never before.

That night we were listening to beautiful, emotion-filled music in an intimate setting sufficiently sinking to enhance the impact of the living sound. None of this effect was captured by the television cameras during the triumphant scene at the second performance. They concentrated on a sequence of close shots.

The small figure on whom most glory rested was conductor Carlo Peter Ollman. There is little point in being able to hear every line of concerted music if rhythm, intonation, entries and cut-offs are in any way approximate. They were all precise, wonderfully so considering the pre-an nature of the conductor's forces, both in the orchestra and on stage. The cast of 400, concentrating relentlessly throughout the community event of their lives, were led at once clearly and inspiringly.

The later Laliputan which grew in stature in every sense but the physical was Canberra Opera's best. Built around a brilliant saluted staff of only three, the few that regional company receive a government subsidy of about \$70000 a year, a tiny fraction of it coming from the Australian Council's Major Award, the bulk from the Department of Capital Territory. Logistically mistakes were worked, through the integration of three local choirs, a school cadet corps, the highly professional Human Voice Dance company, and of course, the livestock.

Tenor Angelo Mariani claims to be unique in actually riding the elephant in the triumphal scene. His courage was rewarded by the fact that his unique features and clear voice took the honours in the telecast. The Asda, Barrister Nuala Jones, revealed a beautiful lyre sound, superior in its light, trashed notes. The others, Margaret Elkins, Donald Sturz, John Shaw and Bryan Dowing made do well aware, there are no stronger voices available for this role. But the far-clattering intensity of the long and important scenes involving only two or three principals was never going to carry throughout a stadium as large as a football field. It was a significant, but not an insurmountable price to pay for the spectacle.



John Shaw and Donald Sturz in *Carmina Burana*. Opera in Asia

OPERA GUIDE

NSW

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (2085)

Opera Theatre, SOH. *The Barbered Head by Sestante* (in English), conductor Geoffrey Arnold, producer, Przemysl Krol; designer, Berika Beyna Szabo; choreographer, Agneta Starova with Glynnis Fowles, Ron Stevens, Gwenni Ewer and Donald Shanks. This disappointing rendition of the Czech favorite has been largely revamped for the summer season with hipper results. Feb 4-11

Medea (Bartók) by Puccini, conductors, Stuart Challender and David Kram, producer, John Copley, designers, Harry Bandt and Michael Stennett, with Rhonda Bruce, Joan Garden, Lynne Carlton, Kathleen McOra, Jennifer Bermingham, Alison Austin, Jon Sydney, Berger Bangsden, Lamberto Furlan, John Pringle and Gregory Yunach. Copley's highly successful production is a mainstay of the AO's repertoire and features a series of the company's leading house talent. Feb 8, 9, 12, 15-26.

Comes of Three Cultures, Nozze by William Shield (English), conductor, Richard Bonynge.

producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Kenneth Powell. *The Bear* by William Walton (English), conductor, David Keelan, producer, Robin Lovejoy, designer, Tom Legec and his-to-claw by Jacques Offenbach (French/English/Italian "nonsense"), conductor, Richard Bonynge, producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Kenneth Powell. Robin Lovejoy's exquisite production of *The Bear* featuring Heather Biggs's intransigent performance as Popova will be joined by two repertoire comedies, Shield's house premiere in 1982 and Offenbach's knockabout one-acter *his-to-claw*. Feb 2, 5, 8, 13, 16, 20, 27.

Lehrer, *Borgje* by Donizetti, conductor, Richard Bonynge, producer, George Ogilvie, designer, Kristian Frandsen, with Jon Sutherland, Bernadette Cullen, Lamberto Furlan, Bruce Martin and Robert Allmen. Feb 3, 6, 10, 13, 17-20, 23, 25.

Norma by Bellini, conductor, Richard Bonynge, producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Fiorella Merten, with Rita Hunter, Rosemary Burns, Alison Austin and Clifford Guest. Feb 24, 27.

FILM FOR BELL

John Bell, artistic director and star turn of Sydney's National Theatre, is enjoying his first major film role as the journalist, husband to Helen Morse, in John Duigan's new film *Far East*. Bryan Brown plays a former Vietnam warrior with a眼睛 (which) in a south east Asian city. Location filming, Macau.

FAMOUS FIRST DRAFTS

One famous book and one famous play are on a first draft funding list of AFC — *Cross Songs for Sunday* by George Johnston (based, in a way, on *My Brother Jack*) and *The Education of Benjamin Franklin* by Scott Spiegel. Gordon Chater took it around Australia, to London and off-Broadway. Will he return for the film?

LEE GORDON FILM

Talking of funding, Steve McLean of Starburst got a first draft funding of \$6,500 for a feature to be called *The Lee Gordon Story*. Gordon was the remarkable American entrepreneur who presented shows at the now demolished Stadium in Rushcutters Bay, Sydney. What he made on rock and roll and concert fees lost on jazz, and died broke a few years ago.

VOSS ON SCREEN BY NOLAN

Vince Lattagno: The famed painter Sydney Nolan is producing a film of that name based on the novel by Patrick White, with Sean Cooper, a Canadian, directing.



Julia Blake



Gordon Chater on the Education of Benjamin Franklin — stage version

Harry M. Miller once had the rights, at which time White held a veto over the choice of director. Joseph Lanzo was once to direct *Pearl* with a script by the late David Malouf, but nobody could raise the money. Cooper made a television/documentary on Nolan in Australia.

GOLDA FILM TO TV

The film about Golda Meir, with Judy Davis as the young Golda to Ingrid Bergman's mature prime minister (and Jack Thompson as one of the men), is likely to be a television mini-series of four one-hour episodes entitled *A Woman Called Golda*. Two of the principal characters in the script have just died — Sadat and Moshe Dayan. Jean Porter, who was playing Sadat, quit the job when the Egyptian president was killed.

JAMES MASON'S OZ BENEFIT

James Mason completed the occasion when Joan Sutherland sang at a Covent Garden benefit for Australian performers in London who have found the going tough. A London newspaper considerably engrossed it was because he has an Australian wife, but failed to name her — the actress Claramae Kaye.

NEW PROMO MANAGER FOR HOYTS

Naomi Laundy, with a background in publicity and administration in publishing,

and travel, and lately with United Artists, has been appointed publicity and promotional manager for Hoyts. Hoyts' Australian releases this year will include *The Man From Snowy River* and *Breaker*.

COLONIAL HOUSE (WITH POOL) WANTED.

"Interested persons" in the Eastern Suburbs have been asked to let the producers of *The Year of Living Dangerously* know if they have available "an impressive and beautiful colonial house with three, courtyard and patios, suitable for consideration as an embassy, set in tropical surroundings" and "a large swimming pool" in dingo surroundings.

SYDNEY UNI FILM CONNECTION

An attempt to revive the Sydney University film connection is being made by the University's Film-makers Society which has re-named Union Theatre, now the Rosebank Theatre. The first effort was a season of local shorts such as *Rebenton* by James Reardon, *One Hundred & One* by Gillian Armstrong, *Playface* by Peter Campbell, *Convict and Police* by Philip Noyce, *Morris Lower Jack* by Sonia Hoffman, *The Approach* by Richard Wherrett, *Sixty and Sixty* by Peter Krugman — more than 30 films in all. This program was laid on for the Sydney Festival, but we sincerely hope that it is only the beginning of cinema's new University life.

Angela Punch Mc Gregor



In Elizabeth Riddell

What does the pathetic drab of *The Chase of Avery Blacksmith*, the tight-lipped wife of *Newfrost*, the witch of *The Island* have to do with red-cliffed, exuberant advertising model in *The Best of Friends*?

"Well, I'm a character actress," Angela Punch McGregor says, "and they're all characters. Certainly Melanie in *The Best of Friends* is a complete change of pace for me. All those clothes, for one thing. It was partly the change of pace that attracted me. I think the script is very funny and accurate."

Angela Punch McGregor — it would have been said a few years ago that there was a name that was too long for any cinema marquee, but the wonders of electronic development have changed all that — lives in a house that is quite hard to find in a leafy northern (but not North Shore, as she points out) suburb of Sydney. It has all-round verandas and is overlooked by apartment blocks of mediocre design, but they are far enough away not to be a worry. Lurkers seep by the kitchen window as she pours tea for me while her husband consults with a builder about renovations. He is Ross McGregor, and he agent and manager. Between them they are Nardoya Productions Ltd. It seems to be a nice, loosely-organized arrangement.

Angela does not long for independence, except of open "house" she says. "I get homesick if I have to go to Manly. When I was working up at Mataranka on *We of the Never Never* I had all sorts of things from home around me. I took some paintings and canvases and a bedsheet and cushions and a video cassette and set up house. Some of us lived in fibroshacks, and in caravans and so on. In great contrast to me, Arthur Dignan, who plays Mr Gunn to my Mrs Gunn, arrived with a couple of T-shirts, a change of clothing and a bag of books and I don't think even noticed the surroundings, which were pretty awful."

We of the Never Never, produced by Adams Pecker, directed by Igor Auzmi, written by Peter Schrock and

photographed by Gary Hansen, will be released in March.

From the domestic peace of her suburban kitchen, Angela looks back to filming at Matilda's Station with affectionate remembrance, now that it is safely over and the picture into post production:

"We were on location for three months, which is a long shoot, especially if you are stuck out in the Territory where it's hot and isolated, and the catering is, to say the least, of limited interest. People are inclined to get a bit frayed at the edges in such circumstances. But I can say this — all of us, every one of us, behaved absolutely in the严谨ness what we were doing."

Angela Parry went to Kununurra, a convent school run by the Order of the Sacre Coeur (the school itself is now demolished and the Krocopal unit established as part of the big Rose Bay Convent). She was a somewhat unruly

student — her words — and refused to quit school on being accepted for NIDA. She graduated in 1974 along with, among others, Andrew Marquand, Ingrid Mason and Elizabeth Alexander.

"The compensation for NIDA is much better now," she says. "I met John Clark, the director, the other day and he said, 'Oh, you'd never get into NIDA now.' I hope he was joking."

"I had no work for a few months. It was just surviving because there was no fit, so saturated with everything to do with acting, and no work. Then I was spotted by Ray Omrod, a director who is now in Perth, and he cast me as Peggie in *The Playbox of the Western World*. I learned the part in 24 hours."

"I did a lot of stage work, in Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmania and then I thought I had better take off for London. Everybody was going. So I did a few well-paid adaptions and packed my bags."

"I went to play every night and

enrolled at the Academy of Music and Drama. But it didn't work. The tourist pleasures were great, but I wondered — what was I doing there? Trying to make it on the English stage? I wanted to make a career in Australia. I felt it would be artificial of me to try to work in England. So I came back, in spite of having paid over all those lovely money miles to the Academy."

"My first film was *Jessie Rock*, a great piece of luck, because I had Fred Schepisi as director. I hate him for not being here, but in America, although I understand his reasons. The film was totally underappreciated and misunderstood, by critics and public." She won the AFI award for Best Supporting Actress in *Rock* and Best Actress in *Newfloyd*, in the same year.

"In fact I have been lucky in all my directions. I have to trust them. I still do a lot of things wrong. I am learning that the less you do, in the acting sense, the better. When I first saw Michael Caine, when I was doing *The Island*, I thought, well, what's so good about that style? But I found out. In other words, less is more. It is what goes on inside the head that counts, not the head itself."

"Michael Ritchie was the director and as well as Michael Caine for me to watch there was Frank Middlemass and David Warner. *The Blood* made on Antigua — Richie chose it because it was the least fashionable of the Caribbean islands — was physically very tiring. It would have done better there and overseas except for the R rating, not for sex but for violence."

Angela has learned the hard way to include certain conditions in her contracts. Referring to the dowdy, generally-reducing wardrobe worn by one of her costars in a recent film she says, "In my contracts now I have the decisions on wardrobe, hairdressing, accommodation, even transport and air-conditioning. It takes courage to argue with a producer about these things, and you might get a reputation for being difficult, but it pays off."

Since finishing *We're the News* she has had a dozen songs and turned them all down. "I hurt a lot, because I love to work. But I will be starting on another film soon, and in the meantime there is that house to enjoy."



Angela Parry & John Clark in *We're the News* — *The Best of Friends*.

Mad Max II — sound and fury

by Elizabeth Riddell

Mad Max II Australia's latest contribution to the hot-metal genre of filmmaking and I do not doubt its massive success not only in Australia but in America and Japan and in certain other parts of the world which otherwise manage poorly by our tourist throng. It may also result in the extensive re-viewing of the original *Mad Max*, which was but a pale pastiche of number two.

The two salient points of the film are first the sound, courtesy of Brian May (who would have thought he had it in him?) and assorted sound effects and above all the Derby system, which brings the dumbbells associated with colliding sheet metal straight into your hand, from which it will race an ear, nose and throat doctor to extract them (he will thereby earn himself another half of a Mercedes and second threepence).

The violence is surreal, contorted, impossible to believe and comparatively free of blood. There are one or two appalling sudden deaths but before you have time to blench the camera is off picking up an amateurish parkour flying off his bicycle into the gravel bath of Broken Hill, where much of the film was made.

Being one of those who doesn't care what happens to people as long as animals suffer, I was upset by the death of Max's friend, a handsome blue cattle dog. But it was all over so moment. The intention by the baddie was plain but the audience did not actually see the arrow on target, and the only sound was an automatic snap. The dog's death has no consequence at the end of the film, so that feelings are not too much harrowed.

Apart from the talented dog the best performances come from Emil Minty (a small boy known as the Final Child) he does clever things with another boomerang) and Mel Gibson who gives a cool, brooding rendition of Max.

Critics who began to take Gibson seriously after his work in *Braveheart* (Gibson won't feel much to attract them in this film, but they can look forward to *The Year of Living Dangerously*).

It would be useless to outline the plot. A spoiler with an uninteresting delivery opens proceedings by saying that two warning tapes have wrecked our world, leaving only a few survivors. This then takes a terrible beating in the course of the



Mel Gibson as Max

film — you could drive a horse and cart, if such a prosaic vehicle were around — through the holes in the script but who cares? The film is a master of wild imagination translated into action even wilder. The twists look impossible, but they come before our very eyes. When dialogue has to be inserted between stunts, at sometimes happens, disaster sets in. The lines are so bad they induced bouts of laughter in the audience. Mike Preston gets

the worst lines, and does his worst with them.

Among those taking part in this cinematic experience are, apart from Gibson, Preston and Minty, Bruce Spence as a deadly gyro pilot Max Plappas Tsofie, Virginia Hey as Warner Woman and Ariane Whittley as a wolf.

After the final battle between the family-goodies and the terribly-baddest some of the belligerent set out for Noosa Heads,

having found an old beachside full of promise of sun, pinupques and peace.

The film has more than 100 names in the production and crew credits. For instance, seven stagepersons under a main contract, six special effects persons, 12 track, take and car mechanics, a construction team of nine and two welders.

Kennedy Miller Entertainment produced, with George Miller as director and distributor except in the US, Canada and Norway by Warner Brothers.

The Best of Friends — Nothing Subtle

by Elizabeth Riddell

There is nothing subtle about *The Best of Friends*. It aims to amuse at a hard trotter above the level, sometimes above the neck, and a sometimes does its score would be the Gilda Radner-George Segal comedy that began with *A Touch of Class*, with a nod in the direction of Neil Simon. For Australia the category is romantic comedy, with education.

Angela Finch McGregor and Graeme Blundell are cast as Melaine and Tom Melaine does communicate his television and Tom is a well-organized teacher accountant, devoted to his cat and the occasional long lunch. They have been friends since schooldays. He has been the recipient of her confidence about men loved and lost; he himself has played the field.

At a dinner held to celebrate their 20 years of friendship Melaine and Tom decide they "ought as well" being such a temporarily out of society company, and they do. The next morning Melaine who has a hangover, is embarrassed, but Tom thinks it might be nice to carry on the good work. To our friends, they decide, their had better forget the cell in the key.

But Melaine finds the proposal Tom is pleased and wants to marry her. She does not want to marry him. They compromise: Tom moves into Melaine's apartment, with his cat. Melaine is a bit apprehensive, if that's the word, and contacts have done it a whole lot of us. The ill-disguised pain their friendship is in tatters, their love affair going bad, anger under pressure from relatives, friends, business acquaintances etc to get married. Six months gone, as people used to say, Melaine agrees to marry Tom but leaves him at the altar before the vows are exchanged, collapsing with what appears to be premature labour pains.

And so it goes. Marvellously specious, questionable when together, Tom and Melaine struggle on through the script's off-kilter and predictable situations carrying only perfunctory laughs.

Their stop-and-go love affair is both interrupted and assisted by Ruth Cracknell, Henry Stept, Graham Round (as a baffled Catholic priest) George Tabori. There is an embarrasing appearance, as temporary warden for Melaine, of Mark Lee of *Deathtrap*. The show incredulous, unsympathetic laughs from the audience.

The performers do their best but not always enough. Once again, it must be asked — is comedy really Australian's thing? Perhaps we should leave it to the Americans and the English or, better still, the French.

The Best of Friends, from The Froodley Film Company and the NSW Film Corporation, was produced by Tom Jeffery, written by Donald Macdonald (actor and revue sketch writer) directed by Michael Robertson and is distributed by Hoyts.

Puberty Blues a lot going for it

by Elizabeth Riddell

How beautiful is the sustained female youth of Australia, and it opens its mouth. That was my first overall reaction to *Puberty Blues* which is alleged by some to be a sensitive study of schoolgirls and schoolboys (and one youth partially employed with a panel van, likely chapter at work and play via Sydney suburb, near about, south west of the metropolis).

The trick with *Puberty Blues* would be to have your personal switch attached to your censor stat, so that you could eliminate practically all the sound. Just as, say, the viewer can associate batonettes and mangled hymns of the cricket and women coming

overstated by turning a knob — one of the last decades.

It would be nice to cut the sound from *Blues* and just watch the kids lurching through their adolescence (the hair) across the pubic patterns. The relief of not having to hear one rage "dead set", a comment that seems to fit all circumstances now adorably from the lips of the adult because would be considerable.

What the boy says is妙. They are not given to much chat, being more the grunting type, and in any case the nose of rancid hamburgers that hangs around them — despite the hours they spend on surf boards, partially immersed in the ocean waves — indicates that whatever they said would not be appetizing.

Blues, *Puberty Blues* has a lot going for it. Jane Long's production is lovely, Margaret Kelly's script skilfully keeps together what is basically a string of episodes and scenes. Don McAlpin's cinematography is beguiling, how the camera lingers on those lovely out-of-uniform legs and spines, not mentioning tops and bottoms and the perspectives, angled, stretched, just once or twice true and repetitive, direction by Bruce Beresford (who will clearly try anything) and the personality and performance of Nell Schofield.

Kathy Lette and Catherine Carey, known as the Sultana Sisters, wrote the little book of the same name when they school experiences around the other ends, and had it published in 1978, when it took off rather smutty. Things may have changed since then "Dead set" may not now be the only regime of communication. But I assume that the girls and boys of the world still have a life style that suits *Blues*, and that will endure.

The principals of *Blues* are Debbie and Sue, high school girls, and Debbie's



The two Georges on full beach on "Puberty Blues" record from John in *Puberty Blues*.

squential boy friends. Bruce and Garry (Debbie is played by Nellie Schobeld, Sue by Jael (maneuvered Vicki Capela). Bruce by Jim Hardin (who may have been watching too much Hegel) and Garry by Geoff Rhys.

For once the theme is on the resilience of the female adolescent, rather than the male. The girls cheat at chess. In so these parents will talk of nothing but teenagers, clothes and boys, the big question being whether to "go out" is the benchmark of cars at driveways or day or hour on Saturday nights. No power for guessing the result of thepondom!

Debbie "goes off" to Gerry after an unsatisfactory affair with Bruce, and fears she is pregnant. The pregnancy subplot is nicely well managed by Retiredad and Schobeld.

The real winner for an audience, in my opinion, are the men on surf behaviour, an anthropological curiosity that would have interested Margaret Mead. By the time the girls get to the beach on weekend mornings the boys are already almost out of sight, on their boards. Once the girls are settled on the sand they are expected to watch every move of the boys and praise the performance when the boys take a break after — "You weren't watching, you didn't see me," exclaims by "I was, I did." The boys relax on the sand while the girls take orders for food, get the money from their parents and go to buy it. When they return they hand the stuff to the boys, who complain about it, the girls themselves eat nothing. This subservience translates from the beach to every aspect of their relationship. Such moulds, of course, set the standard for the behaviour of the masses, if that is the word. Australian rule. This is where it all begins. This is also ours, and if you don't want to know about it go to the film anyway for the reasons mentioned earlier.

There are interesting points of resemblance between Michael Thornhill's much glossier and less professional *JJ Holden* and between an interesting California film, *The Flock*. *Flock*, Nell Schobeld at 17 is a touch too old for someone in which she wrestles with another girl on the floor of the school bus, is caught cheating, and sulks childishly with her parents. But she brings such a splendid presence, such looks and spirit to the role that it does not matter.

The others concerned are Kym Wilson, Alan Cassell, Rowena Wallace (no ponytail) and Charles Trudgett, this as the school principal, God help him. The boy you would least like to have anything to do with is called Brad, played by Ned Landre.

The Spits Ensign song "I Hope I Never", in the best of three sang by Sharon O'Neill (she was funded privately and by the ABC, Amalgamated Television and Filmcorp, and distributed by Bradshaw-

FILM GUIDE

WATCH FOR THESE

TIME BANDITS is a good joke. Monty Python resurrected, about some dwarfs, gnomes or leprechauns who band together as the most inefficient gang of international robbers ever to blunder their way to the acquisition of untold riches. Essentially approach it with a relaxed mind.



Peter Jackson and Dominic Monaghan in *Time Bandits*

PRIEST OF LOVE is about the writer D.H. Lawrence, and comes from Britain with a few outrageous scenes, which, it seems, are toned down from the real thing, gleaned from diaries. With Ian McKellen, Janet Suzman, Penelope Keith, it may have been nominated for an Oscar by the time you read this.



Ian McKellen as Lawrence in *Priest of Love*

THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER stars Miss Piggy (of whom some of us are getting a bit tired but not tired enough to stay away) and the Company and has a plus in the presence of John Cleese, Debra Paget, Robert Morley and Charles Grodin.

THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN is a brilliant visual experience, meaningful & great to watch though you may not care in the end what happens to the characters. In any case, read the book by John Fowles.

MAD MAX 2 — well, more of the same Mad Max 1 has grossed more than \$100 million at the box office returning a great hunk of money to the distributors, Roadshow, and entertaining a lot of people. In the second helping, Mel Gibson rules again.

TRUE CONFESSIONS, from the book of the same name by John Gregory Dunne, with Robert De Niro and Robert Duvall as Los Angeles brothers priest and cop, the one urgently pushing for power in the church, the other doggedly and sometimes maddeningly pursuing criminals, is a must. Joan Cusack, Dunne's wife, had a hand in the script which maybe softens up just a little towards the end.

ARTHUR teams Dudley Moore and John Gielgud as a rich silly employer and an impeccable gentleman's gentleman. It is full of good one-liners and magnificently funny scenes and offers Linda Manzini, in what is almost a supporting role.



Dudley Moore and Linda Manzini in *Arthur*

THE FIANCEE is the film that was voted most popular at the 1981 Sydney Film Festival and therefore heads the list for the Festival tour to country centres in NSW after a summer season. In German with English subtitles, it tells the extraordinary and extraordinarily moving, true story, in fictional form of Eva Lippold's imprisonment for political activism in pre-war Nazi Germany. Eva was the fiancée, who during her 10 years in jail kept her love alive, with few meetings. The last time she sees him, he is also in prison.

DEMOCRACY FOR DANCERS

In light of the AB dancer's demands, it is interesting to hear about the democratic running of ballet companies in Scandinavia. From Tony Giesen, an Australian dancer who has worked there for 13 years, the law decide as a member of the Norwegian National Ballet. The details apply to the company, but are generally applicable in that they follow the worker-participation example of industrial companies in that part of the world.

Dancers have a say in the choice of dancers joining the company and submit an annual list of recommendations for the repertoire. They don't get involved in casting, but if they feel a dancer being unduly favoured by, they will offer to go with that dancer to the director to ask why. In recent years, the dancers' opinion has influenced the selection of artistic staff.

The dancers also form formal representatives once a year by secret ballot. Two of them — one from soloist ranks, the other from the corps — will be members of the majority jury with the company's repertory, ballet master and director. The fact that they are outnumbered by the staff means they can have their say without dominating the decision — yet the staff doesn't often go against the dancers' opinion, according to Giesen.

He has found it a healthy environment, though he says you have to be alert to possible dangers. "You have to watch people, and even yourself, make sure that motivation isn't being used to help avoid change. Or you might yourself making decisions automatically, without taking others' opinions, and that is the one you should move aside and let someone act as the dancers' representative."

There is always an air on the board of management, and the dancers are also involved in general wage decisions. The performers may nominate when they like to sit in Unshaded formation at the conference table, with the management opposite and the State representatives in between.

"This system of participation works most of the time," says Giesen. "Sometimes you might get in a director who is an effective person but who cannot adjust to it. It is also difficult if the democratic local, where they have heavy responsibilities on stage, it is hard to get them to settle in a meeting and keep awake the live human. But it does marvels for you to turn around speak to members of parliament about things you care about."

Having been a member of the company for 10 years, he receives a pension of 25 percent off his highest salary in that time. Dancers who have served 20 years get 56 per cent. In each case, 40 percent of that sum is handed off as soon as the retired dancer goes onto a full-time job.

In the meantime, it enables the dancer to contemplate a new career. Giesen has already established himself as a teacher in Norway, and came back to Australia to check out the scene during the summer. He doesn't know yet whether he future will be here or there — or both.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF DANCE

The world's first multi-volume reference work on dance is being prepared for publication in America. Called *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, it will be published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1984.

The four volumes, plus an index volume, are being edited by Schira Isaacs Cohen, former editor of the dance scholarship publication *Dance Perspectives*. Her panel of associate editors includes dance critics, scholars, a teacher, a designer and an anthropologist who is also a labor analyst and Dance Research Coordinator at New York University's Department of Performance Studies.

A synopsis of the encyclopedia's contents promises it will cover Western classical dance, theatrical dance of the non-Western world, ritual and recreational dance. Entries, arranged alphabetically, will range from brief definitions to essays on historical subjects and thematic entries. The reference list will include bibliographies and non-book sources such as films, recordings and related books.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE...

Sydney dance-goes certainly can't complain about variety. This year, the Australian Ballet's juice du matinée will be the addition of *The Nutcracker* to its repertoire, with the production by Ronald Holder, choreo. Leonid Kreidels and Valentina Karlova. Meanwhile, Graeme Murphy has dressed up an extraordinary event for the Sydney Dance Company next month, in which actors and musicians will work with his nucleus of dancers as an experimental collaboration to follow the company's final seasons in the Drama Theatre and the Opera Theatre of the Sydney Opera House.

AUSTRALIAN BALLET — A SECOND CHANCE

The Australian Ballet is starting 1982 with its complement of performers hardly disturbed by the 25-day dancers' strike late last year. Most who have left — Gary Norman, David Barrett, Ken Whamond and Joseph Lautman, for example — had declared their intentions before the strike.

Kalvin Cox is the major loss. He was chief spokesman for the dancers on strike, and by the time they voted 28-20 to return to work, he had decided he could not continue having power with the company.

Two other leading dancers, Dale Belote and Joanne Michel, were considering offers from American companies. Although they decided to stay with the Australian Ballet, both offer holders later in 1982 should they find that the AB management's new resolutions don't take effect.

More importantly for Australia, the idea of forming another classical ballet company in this country has not been shelved. It is being vigorously pursued by Kalvin Cox, who is finding a great deal of support in artistic quarters and growing interest on the financial side.

Initially, when the plan was mooted, almost all the dancers were determined to stay firm against the AB management as a unit. They were, in fact, a company which could have obtained an evening of ballet and presented it with the help of an entrepreneur like Michael Badgley who had decided his support for the project.

But then the AB Board offered a 23-point peace plan which included a position on the board for someone elected by the dancers, more rehearsal time, the employment of a physiotherapist, more dancers, dancer involvement in the choice of senior staff appointments, a management consultant, less's administration to guide restructuring of the company and, most importantly, the removal of administrator Peter Baker's influence from the artistic area.

Once the majority of dancers had accepted it, even those who doubted the changes will work in practice decided to at least give them a go. As the company's Equity representative, Paul de Manon, puts it: "After all that we have fought for, I feel that people should try to prove to the public that we were fighting for a cause, and to make sure for the sake of future dancers that the promises are carried out."

POTENT DANCE THEATRE

Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theatre

by Bill Shephard

Jim Sharman clearly believes strongly in Pina Bausch and her Wuppertal Dance Theatre, so do the German and French theatre critics, yet when Sharman announced it as the "greatest and most exciting theatre company today", many people were bewildered. That is symptomatic of nothing else but the fact that many Australian arts practitioners and audiences categorise crudely, as dance were not a branch of theatre.

Bank of course, but I'm sure that many "legit" theatre fans will not even consider going to see Pina Bausch. Sad when one considers the integration of "word" and "gesture" in Tadeusz Kantor's *Croat 2*, Grotowski's *Fear* or Peter Brook's Company.

The trouble is we haven't seen too much of this sort of integration in Australia (with the possible exception of the One Extra Dance Company amongst others) although that is changing and it will be interesting to see what comes out of the Sydney Dance Company's invited-audience only, experimental season at the Opera House in March.

One thing is certain, however, Pina Bausch's house style is stark and austere, the marketing concessions to win popularity and relevance enjoys and is abhorred by her company will do so having been won over by her ideas and the power of her performers.

As a matter of fact, Bausch and her company have aimed at the integration of words and dance



Bausch's *Death and Nightingale*



Bausch's *Australasia* Photo Ute Weier

occasionally, a merely having been noted as the need arose. Bausch's initial professional dance career began as a dancer in the Metropolitan Opera Ballet Group, relegated to appearances in the dismal diversions of ballet in 19th century operas. Knowing

the genre, it's not hard to understand her getting fed up with that.

After New York she danced with the Folkwang Berlin in Essen, later becoming its director. From there to her present position in Wuppertal can be drawn a direct line, because the



1989 Photo: Udo Weller

Folkwangshalle was created in 1929 by the greatest innovator and choreographer in German dance, Kurt Jooss.

Jooss did away with better "beauty" and went for hand theatricality with a powerful social conscience, just as radical in his day as Brecht. His greatest work, the anti-war *The Green Table* is still powerful and poignant today.

Pina Bausch has inherited that social conscience and the theatrical clarity, but with one difference, her obsessions are more personal, dealing almost totally with the drama of human relationships. Her material has always been chosen to give free reign to her precepts. Her first major dance creation, fully staged versions of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* and Iphigenia in Tauris where the singers were relegated to the pit and the works were totally danced, are highly illustrative. *Orpheus* deals with love that knows no boundaries while *Iphigenia* is about a woman sacrificed to male needs.

From there it goes directly to the Brecht/Weill ballet *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *The Rose of Spring* and one of the works to be seen on the Australian tour, *Blackbird*. All of them deal with the way people (especially women) are

used, the war of the sexes and the cannibalism of human relationships.

For such convergence of vision, Bausch has sometimes been scathingly rebuked. Horst Koegler, editor of the German dance monthly *Ballett* has said that "... [Legend of Cleopatra] looks dead and prosaic, like the flabbiness of a spinner from the backwoods who has never gone beyond puberty... the dance content is not just the old Bausch formulas. Has no-one ever told Bausch and her lot that one can also be fun and liberating..."

Audiences however, no matter where the company performs, have always been deeply moved by what they've seen, condensation and intense prime ring on all sides. Bausch especially has always caused the greatest excitement. Barok wrote the opera as a psychoanalytic/symbolic journey into the nature of Love. Bausch's version is a series of searing vignettes about sexual luxury, male/female roles and the growth and disjunction of a relationship.

The seven doors of the opera become seven "rooms from a marriage" elaborated on and dissected by the entire company. Properly titled

Reminiscences on Hearing a copied recording of Bela Bartok's opera Duke Bluebeard's Castle the work is set in a huge deserted room dominated by a tape recorder. At one point the windows at the back of the room are opened and a great flood of dead leaves cascades into the room; the bark, it seems, is to be erased amongst the detritus of the past, the memory of struggle. The central duet progresses by fits and starts, the men limp down and durably advertise their vitality, a woman's head is viciously bashed against a wall — it is indeed a harrowing work.

But Bausch is not always unromantic and harsh in her outlook, although her concepts remain pure. One other work is between the Apertures, for example, *Kommunity*, which is always performed in a dance hall, is an exercise in tenderness, experiments in tenderness, the search for it and the question of when is it not tenderness at all?

One of the most telling *Kommunity* scenes shows a pair separated by a wide distance. Each smiles timidly at the distant partner. But finally they take off single pieces of clothing while looking at each other, they show vulnerable "bare" spots. Across the protective space they get very close while the outward distance remains the same.

1980 is the one work that Jim Sharman wanted especially to be seen in Australia. On a bare stage covered with real turf, the dancers enact a dreamlike fantasy on the theme of childhood memories and fears, adult fears, a father who liked to dress his little girl up in her mother's clothes and so on. A real magical moment at a birthday party at which a slowly and sadly becomes apparent that one of their number is being politely and totally ostracised. The whole enactment is recorded by video cameras and these are used when the company goes amongst the audience to dance.

This is a type of theatre that cannot be categorised and a lot of people's ideas and concepts are going to be upset, but, having seen the Company before, I have a feeling that the audiences are going to have something that will remain in their memories for a long time and be every bit as potent as previous major attractions to the Adelaide Festival have been.

DANCE -REVIEWS

The AB and The Merry Widow

by Bill Sheasbridge

When the Australian Ballet finally managed to get something onto a Sydney stage last year (*The Merry Widow*), the only truly memorable and resounding success was the return to the stage of Marilyn Rose.

Whether her return is full-time, permanent or not, rests with her, the AB Administration and whether or not any changes for the better in the company's structure are achieved. The management consultancy firm called in to study the set-up of the company have been watching and evaluating for some weeks now and are expected to give their recommendations.

Recommendations, though are all they are, the Board are not bound to accept them, but if (the Board) has any sense of responsibility it will abide by some of them, then the decisions are adamant that if no change is made, there will be no AB for a Board to sit on.

The Merry Widow was apparently chosen because it was the only work that had been adequately rehearsed at the time the strike was called last year, and the Board wanted desperately something to present in Sydney before the end of the year. Given the problems, it would be unreasonable to expect a top-line presentation, it was inadequate and served to highlight some of the troubles that beset the Company now.

Initially *Merry Widow* was a pleasant page of froth well contained, sprightly and lacking in any sort of maury choreographic substance. When it first appeared it was refreshing because it was so well conceived as a story-tale, so well produced by Sir Robert Helpmann and marvellously performed by a well-trained and theatrically astute body of dancers. But it, more than most other ballets in the repertoire, has suffered from over-exposure. What was at first light and frothy is now tedious and forced. Instead of a company that dances through it with a ready assistance, we now have a group of dancers going through it by rote, mechanical and leaden; you can almost feel their contempt and resistance there.

It has been a money spinner for the company, if for no other reason than the fact that you'll never lose money underestimating the taste of the public, but even now the public is heavily sceptical. The AB was, from my observations, hard pressed to

get anything near a suitable attendance, and talk during the intervals was full of comments not to make next year's subsqueam.

Perhaps something could have been salvaged earlier if money had been spent to bring back Sir Robert and his choreographer, Donald Hyndz or Newark and refit the piece, give it some more substance and recreate the initial elation, but that didn't happen.

The structure remains the same, the same setting of scene and characters in Act I, the great love duet between Danilo and Hanna Glawari and those great bouncing waltzes as background.

Act II gives us the basic plot development against backdrops of Slave colour, which were noticeable for their total lack of coherence and conviction.

Of all the casts in the season the best all round pairing was that of Marilyn Rose and Gary Norman. Rose and Norman have always had a warm rapport on stage and Rose, after all, the one in whom the work was basically created.

Coming back to the week after such a long lay off, it is no wonder Rose was beatiful and tired to start off with (the first "maurit" duet was edgy and contained where it should have been swooning), but as the evening progressed, she relaxed and gave the choreographer more character than it has which, let's face it, isn't all that hard to do. The final scene in Maxine's restaurant was Edgery instead of carefree and abandoned. But here again Rose's presence and the warmth generated between her and Gary Norman prepared them as the major centrepiece of the story and drew all the sympathy to them.

The alternate casts of Dale Baker paired with newly promoted principal Lynette Mann and Valentine and Leonid Koslov were from scratchy.

Dale Baker still suffers from a tendency to throw himself around the stage with a sloppy graft at beavers. He carries across as vacuous and lacking in aristocratic charm while Mann looked terrified and uncertain. She is too raw to this sort of character dancing, especially with the moisture between the past calls for, and I worry about her being shoved into this sort of material before she is physically or emotionally prepared for it.

The Koslov are, by nature and temperament, totally unsuited to the pastel delicacy of the work. Valentine charged in with all the energy and ferocious fire of a Donskoye farce, while Leonid was so wooden and deferential that

you'd never suspect there was any love between the two characters at all.

The Corps de Ballet tried valiantly to go through their allotted parts but there was no ensemble and apparently no agreement as to timing and stance. It did come across fleetingly in the first act when they swayed and waltzed an off flying on the wings of nervous energy.

It happened again for a while in the last act with the can-can and the shifting focus of the water ensemble, but it could have been improved if only... look, do I have to go on like this, it's like strengthen the picture in a bevered house, the Australian Ballet is a company in total decay.

The administration and artistic direction of a corps stand aside from a body of dancers from whom they have no respect. The company has a rotting staff which is unable to fulfil adequately its position, and it has a Board that has no direct knowledge of the conditions and circumstances that brought about last year's trouble. It has a subscription audience that demonstrably is falling off every year.

Most of the dancers involved in the strike have rejoined for this year, but even they would tell you that it's largely in the way of a stop-gap measure while they look about for jobs overseas.

Next year's subscription season is a mixed bag of mixed blessings. Sydney will finally get to see *The Maschrek* and *Seven Lake* (in the Concert Hall yet) and a long-awaited new production of *The Nutcracker*.

The triple bill is a mixture of the promising and the absurd. Gina Torley's *Septet* and *Chile* is probably the only workable production of that ballet (again maybe from Ashton's) which exists in the form of the Fokine score.

Jim Kyhan's *Ranunc to the Strange Land* is a "strange" abstruse work from that choreographer's Delirious days with the Stuttgart Ballet that helped catapult him into world prominence. Robert Ray, creator of last year's abysmal *Pheas* will make a new work to Gershwin's *Cousins in F*.

Vassana Nektaria, an obscure choreographer of whom I have never heard will create what is described in the press release as "a grandfather's romantic showstopper".

And lastly Gerald Arpino's *Treasy* will be exchanged. This is a rock ballet created for the Robert Joffrey Ballet back in the late 60's or early 70's. It was suitable enough then, in the days of Berkeley University and Kent State, but now even the Joffrey has dropped it and gone on to

better things. Perhaps the AB thought it would be "big" to have — perhaps it will add variety — perhaps it can cheap

There were plans to mount a Stravinsky triple bill in honour of that composer's centenary this year, focussing on on Tetley's

The Rite of Spring, but still has disappeared, the University Trust wanted payment for the performing rights (which is fully reasonable) and Peter Tolson won't propose to pay it, so our dear Stravinsky

are ground-trashed or otherwise. Stravinsky is one of the truly great composers of all time and certainly the greatest creator of ballet music. The works he created in collaboration with Nijinsky and Balanchine altered the whole face of the form and any ballet company

that is a decision that is not defensible on



Dancer: Roger and Paul J. Murray in the AB's *Nancy Wilson*. Photo: Bruce, 1982.

that deserves the name but a duty towards him and his cause.

This year, symphony orchestras, chamber groups, choirs and musicians will all celebrate his centenary, perhaps the state dance companies will too, but the Australian Ballet will not part with the cash to do so — that in itself speaks volumes.

This year's Festival of Dance has come and gone.

There were the usual outdoor fun and sun-frolics, food and drink, refreshments, operas and plays and no three performances under the aegis of the Festival Committee, not one.

The Human Voice Dance Company from Canberra gave performances of its latest work, in the Seymour Centre Events Theatre, totally on its own bat and funded by itself. Other than that there was nothing. The Festival Committee "promised" there will be dance next year. But that is not enough.

The official excuse given was that "the money ran out", one would like to ask why.

In the thinking behind the Festival such that they don't believe dance performances should be a part of it? There should have been money put aside to make sure there were dance groups or performances, not leave it to the last until all the foreign imports, and plays about dual relationships and so on had had their slice, and then find out that there was nothing left.

It is not enough to have outside performances of the occasional opera or dance as a part of the performing arts and as such it should have had a place on the performance schedule.

Perhaps next year the Festival will remember to put aside money for it, or at least have some "cultural advisers" who aren't so lost in their noses and egos.

deal with the ends of all sorts of dramatic dreams-of-love or patterns of emotional division, but the final message is one of hope. In the closing scene the dancers huddle under a makeshift shelter in a landscape of other desolation — all the elements of modern drama of despair are present — but the mood is optimistic. The debt to each writer is Brecht and Bridget in obvious. Sometimes too much so, but the prevailing theme is not of human isolation, but of human sharing; the seven characters share their poverty, their blankets, their fears, their laughter, their music, and above all, their dancing.

This is a company of seven individual dancers, there is no corps de ballet, and the term "prime ballerina" is inappropriate. Each dancer makes her or his contribution to the whole work in highlighting portrayals of a wide range of human emotions and situations. But it would be tragic not to mention the work of one or two of the company's women, Wendy Wallace and Cheryl Stock.

So far as the ballet has a central character, that character is Semeion, and Wendy Wallace's interpretation of this role is superlative. From the opening tableau of suburban bliss to her part in the aggressive dance of the community of initiates in Act Three, Technique and characterization alike are superb. Cheryl Stock's in the role of one of "The Others", a

gamine recluse and plainette by name, her husky singing in mezzo voice is a high spot of the production. And to single out these two performers for especial praise is not to denigrate the other five.

Nevertheless, despite all these strengths, the production is not an unqualified success. Though the dancing and the set are dazzling to look at, the work as a whole is too episodic, one is left with the impression of a series of brilliantly executed canaries which fail to fly a narrow margin to add up to a coherent dramatic statement.

There is a problem, too, with the use of dialogue. It sometimes works well, but in other instances it is intrusive and unnecessary. It is more effective when it springs naturally from the dances and complements the central element of dance, and most incongruous when it attempts to make an ideological or moral point. There is a charming illustration of the difference when a passing young person asks the question, "How would you cope with a whole lot of people living on top of you?" How, indeed? The question makes the point far more effectively and economically than the sermon.

But these problems do not detract from the company's achievement in *The End of a Dream*. Human Voice is forging a national reputation for innovative and original choreography which creates not so much ballet as a visual theatrical expression. *The End of a Dream* is a worthy addition to the repertoire.

DANCE GUIDE

NSW

LINDSAY KEMP & COMPANY

Capitol Theatre (2123455). The Dream, mime version of A Midsummer Night's Dream, unlikely to be like anything you've seen before and Flowers, Kemp's exotic concoction from Jean Genet. Starts Feb 23.

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY

Opera Theatre, SOH (20588). Program of new works by Carl Morow, Andra Toppe and Graeme Murphy. Starts Feb 18.

VIC

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Palais Theatre, St Kilda (5340661).

The Merry Widow. Lots of waltzing to Lehár's music. Feb 18-24.

AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY (3141848)

Incubating the State Dance Theatre Education Unit. In schools performances. The program includes potted versions of Giselle, The Nutcracker and Swan Lake. Feb 8-26. Evening performance of Australian Dance Works' Woodlark. Community Centre on Feb 18. Moomba performance in the Treasury Gardens. Feb 27 and 28.

LINDSAY KEMP & COMPANY

Her Majesty's Theatre (6633911). The Dream, mime version of A Midsummer Night's Dream, unlikely to be like anything you've seen before. Feb 8-20.

The End of a Dream — inventive and original

By Jane Healey

Don Paton's new creation with the Human Voice Dance Theatre is a piece of modern epic drama which is not afraid, nor ashamed, to ramshack the whole repertoire of theatrical devices to make an effect. Song and piano-casting, spoken dialogue and clever costuming and properties are employed, as well as the fundamental elements of motion and audience.

Loosely woven around the theme of the mortal triangle, the three acts of the bal-

MUSIC

Saint Cecilia and the holiday spirit

by Fred Blanks

There was a time, when Diapason still referred fondly, in which musicians laid down their arms a week or two after St Cecilia's Day (which falls on November 22) and — except for the odd benefit — gave concertos no reason, incommemorative, until the beginning of March. That gave music critics the chance to review acquaintances with their families have a holiday, and invent new adjectives ready for the next round of the fray.

Those halcyon days have been gradually whittled away. At one end, every choir and musical organization with a letterhead (which is often their only conspicuous asset) felt the need to present a Christmas concert, so that the sound of carols permeated right and the sight of the Yuletide turkey triumphed over it. At the other end, the optimistic powers-that-were decided that they should provide a culturally pleasing alternative to tailing and eeling by organizing a summer opera season. Next came the bazaar-mongers, who decided that what Sydney needed desperately was a festival at the latter end of the year during which people could do such things as queue up for hours across shadowless Hyde Park in order to buy some exotic food item which they could have purchased for half the price with no waiting at all in their own suburbs, or go to some kind of musical novelty (grossly rather poorly performed) in various venues as inspiring as the Town Hall.

The final result of all this is that music has closed the silence gap and allows itself into an annual once-upon-a-time holiday drama break-over between Christmas and New Year. No longer do critics get a holiday, some musicians or other will always find a way of performing it. No wonder critics get caratterizzato.

Sport-sports may claim that the never actually closed, but St Cecilia has been the undisputed patron saint of music since around 1500. Her portfolio is, in fact, a double one, for she is also patron saint of the blind. The details of her life depend on which biographer or encyclopedist you believe.

Cecilia was a Roman of noble birth who leapt towards Christianity and took a vow of celibacy, a situation which could have



Conductor, L. J. Kelly, Coffey

caused some dismay to the young Roman pagan Valentine when Cecilia's parents forced her to marry. Fortunately he also turned Christian and agreed to respect the vow, with somewhat unexpected, reduced disastrous consequences. For the story has it that Cecilia was visited secretly every night by an angel who had fallen in love with her mortal coils. One night the angel, making his customary visit, was unexpectedly discovered by the husband, and — to put it in as euphemistic a manner as good taste demands — the angel gave to both Cecilia and her husband a crown of martyrdom which he had providentially brought with him from Paradise.

Saint Cecilia, who is also regarded to have inspired the organ, has inspired many musicians (such as Purcell, Handel, Spohr and Britten), painters and authors (such as Addison, Dryden and Pope). From the late 16th century onwards, organ festivals in her honour proliferated, often around her saint day of November 22 — which just happens to have been the birthday of the famous English talk-sing collector Cecil Sharp in 1859 and composer Benjamin Britten in 1913.

Which leads us to the performance of two appropriate works on the same day — Britten's *Three Sea-Songs* (words by W H Auden who, like Britten, died in 1973) and Handel's setting of the Daylight ode *Alexander's Feast* (opera, 1697; reviv. 1736). The singers were the Collegium Musicum Chor of the University of NSW conducted by Patricia Brown for Britten, Roger Cook for Handel, and most notable features were the vivid immediacy of choral attack and the lumbardianza shared by soloist (soprano Gerald English, soprano Beverly Bryson and bass Grant Dickson). A few signs of strain or a portentous phaser were quickly sorted for, so that the patricians, immune to minor infirmities, had every cause to feel honoured.

St Cecilia was not the only personage associated with the diverse line of successors who are presently remembered during the closing stages of 1981. Pan, the Greek god of shepherds, forests, wild life and fertility (a lot of portables to look after) also stepped onto prominence when Gheorghe Zamfir, supported by half a dozen fellow Romanians, exhibited wizardry on The Parthenon (not instruments made of bamboo pipes with which Pan directed seductive sounds towards Syrene and assorted other nymphs). Zamfir is a player of nimbly lips and mercurial breath, but his fellow artists, playing folk instruments like the cimbalom and some types of shawm, were no less skilled. The music itself, of Romanian folk origin (much of it jazz Transylvania, the vampire country) sounded a little less at home in a formal concert setting than it would have done in its Balkan wine-cellars or, for that matter, in a croaky Kings Cross tenement.

The Parthenon music was very old. At the other end of the time scale we heard concert music for piano duos played by Nigel Butterley and Deborah Frost, their compositions — especially a sonata by Malcolm Williamson and a piece by Peter Weller — superb intent on taking music by the scruff of its neck and wringing the life out of it. There was nothing here to charm the ear, and precious little to ingross the mind, but there was much to be found in the finger inter-knots. In contrast there was some music, so-called, by the guru of American anti-guitar John Cage, which was composed, recalled, by placing metal and paper clips where the paper showed imperfections or where a throw of dice had indicated, not content with these abstract notes, Cage then leaves much of the timing and shape of the resultant poem to the whim of his performers. The actual sound was thin, with notes like molecules in outer space.

Contemporary music of a more conventional kind came by courtesy of the ABC *Music of the Twentieth Century* series, for which the excellent Polish-born American conductor Stanislaw Skrowaczewski took charge of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. In what was to have been the middle concert of the series, but turned out to be the last because industrial unrest in the Town Hall scuttled the third one, the program included music by another American patriarch, Charles Ives, whose *Concord Ode* showed how jolly polytonality can be, and by Stravinsky, whose complete *Rite of Spring* proved that the full balalaika can still fire music that has escaped the notice. Soloist was Yury Simonoff with the first of Prokofiev's piano concertos, a profane but tunefulless reading.

Having brought news of some exceedingly obscure and some relatively recent music, we shall spend a few paragraphs with the in-betweeners. Last, for example, The South Pacific Lute Society, which pays tribute to its eponymous master about three times a year, presented a program of his chansons, played by such leading Sydney pianists as Gordon Warren, Sanya Horne, Elizabeth Powell, Terry Baldwin, Grand Wilkins and Corry McVicar. These pieces need much diabolical digital dexterity, the dangers are technical diffraction and rhythmic stiffness. Not all players overcome both of these dangers, but their reproducing was vastly entertaining. Also primarily a vehicle for entertainment, devised at the sub-usage group of concertgoers, was an ABC family concert which filled the Opera House Concert Hall. The formula for these concerts includes balloon floating down from where other balloons have settled, door prizes, and coloured lights — but there is also a sensible approach to programming that

manages to combine easy enjoyment with culture, this time, there were works like Saint-Saëns' *Carmina Burana*, with Dennis Collins as narrator, and Walton's *Crown Imperial* featuring the Australian Soprano and Quilter's *Odeuter's Omenae*. The conductor Brian Buggy introduced the music with comments that sometimes went rather over the meadowly heads, but the playing was creditable.

A much more laudatory adjective must be reserved for the performance of Verdi's *Requiem* which the Sydney Philharmonic Society presented in a full Concert Hall. It was splendid, largely because conductor Carlo Belotti Cilario, an expert on the operatic repertoire which includes the *Requiem* (similar to the dispositions of liturgies who would prefer to regard it as a ecclesiastical document, recited it from memory with few annotations to detail), and as able to provoke the Philharmonic Chorus into full-throated singing. They had fortresses easier to surmount than pianissimo, but maintained a high standard as did the excellent Australian Chamber Orchestra and a very finely balanced ensemble of soloists in soprano Joan Cadene, alto Lauren Eliza, mezzo Anthony Bellotti and bass Noel Mangin, the last two from New Zealand.

The smaller Philharmonic Moon Choir, conducted by Peter Seymour, regressed about as far as a choir can go when singing a full mass setting by a single composer, in performing the *Mixta De Noche Dura* written about 1684 by Guillaume de Machaut. The service was not "voiced" by Watsons Estate, who paid attention to the arrangement, acoustic style and underlined the vocal lines, which he low because medieval church choirs excluded females, with bows and percussion. Having made the rounds historical obligation, the program then adjusted to more recent Christmas music, ringing with the usual batch of Hallelujahs and cause the progress of the masses with appropriate significance at the Eco-circus in Kensington Gardens, the first matinée in spring, the fall of the first leaf in autumn, or the first children in winter.

Moving back just a foot inside the door, Santa Claus established his customary December dominance with sundry come-ons from all manner of academic and social institutions presenting programs often as alike as the contents of a Christmas stocking, and almost all singable provided you were thoroughly saturated with the appropriate Christmas spirit. There were, it is true, some exceptions to the sound-alike formula — like concerts by the Australian Chamber Orchestra prior to its first European tour, together with the only soon to be disbanded Lesbian Consort, for example — but you did not have to go very far to hear the voice of Maude's *Memorial* over the land.

Books //

Invasions of Australia

by John McCullough

Balibo's House by Thomas Keneally
Currency Press, pp 22 95
Legends on the Screen by John Telfoch
Currency Press/Australian Film Institute

Dick Marz, introducing Thomas Keneally's *Balibo's House*, tells how he was sitting discussing the play's white limitations with a group of black colleagues, when a young girl spoke: "Isn't it a true story? If it's true and it's about our people, does it matter who writes it?" It's about us — about our ways, isn't it? Certainly, from a white point of view the play has a great truth and it deals with an important story — the clash of black and white cultures in an island remote tributary — with a directness and clarity which is generally not there in much Australian drama. Alongside the present preoccupation with strange, remote, exotic, obscure, foreign and out-of-synch, Keneally's earned confrontation with such a powerful, immediately important subject is exciting.

In the play, Balibo is torn between conflicting cultural interpretations of the fate which kills his woman and blows down his tribal hut. In an attempt to retributive, and to learn the "pattern" which seems to keep white civilisation together, he offers up a gift to the whites, the most sacred knowledge of his tribe, in the form of the range. The range are images, incantatory objects which are often shown to whites or women. In reality Balibo expects to learn the sacred tribal secrets of the whites, but of course they haven't any and they don't understand the significance of Balibo's gift. The final image of the play is of the woman Doolie sitting on top of the range, with her washing hanging on them, listening to the nearest thing whites can offer in the way of sacred cultural objects — a blaring transistor radio. As Ken Hirsch says in his introduction, it is a tragic, moving conclusion.

Marz describes one performance of the Nervous production of *Balibo's House* which was attended by ten tribal blacks from the reservation where it all originally happened. In the theatre there was a further division between the tribal blacks whose experience was the basis of the story and the white blacks, working in the white man's theatre, who were telling their own story as well. Marz writes, "I am told that



at a meeting back in their country they voted unanimously against the play. To me it is a pity (but then again I am not in indigenous race). In this another sad image of a culture fragmented by what Keneally calls the lack of integration of the colonising, conquering whites.

John Telfoch's *Legends on the Screen* analyses a totally different sort of invasion than that of the Australian film industry of the 1920's by American producers, and of the Australian distribution networks by American films. It is for many people a highly evocative subject, and even in Telfoch's dense, complex and sometimes obscure account of it, a little poison snakes occasionally to shore through.

Legends on the Screen is a specialist work, the first of a series of monographs published jointly by Currency Press and the Australian Film Institute. Sylvia Lawson runs the race in her General Editor's Preface: "The series attempts to take up, and work on terms of, the new questions being asked about the relations of text and context, art and industry, art, society and culture, screen and audience." The general litigant, to whom it has not yet occurred to ask such questions, will find the book rather heavy going.

Many of Telfoch's central ideas, although not his methodology, will be familiar to students of Australian drama and literature. There is a legendary opposition of bushified city values, with the clean, virtuous, peace-loving agent of the bush standing against the wicked, sophisticated cities, the hating of that opposition to re-colonise form, the

luring of inchoate and satirical, as local rednecks begin to try to represent the colourful Australian environment and the two-faced assimilation which the studio — on the one hand looking for local audiences and on the other in the overseas market for whom the local colour was to be an advertisement for Australia. These are important issues in Australian drama from the 1920's to the 1950's.

The industry, of course, is much more complex, being a commercial activity as well as a means of communication as well as a form of art. For this reason many books on film get either turgid for the layman, or concerned with webulations of industrial politics, bureaucracy, money, percentages and profit. Telfoch's book is no exception, but the effort is worth it — concerned as he is to link the narrative conventions and structures of the films with the assumptions and policies in the industry that produced them. Not surprisingly most of the artistic analysis is reserved for directors such as Raymond Longford and Franklin Barrett, and much of the political and economic analysis for the distributors and exhibitors, as well as the American invaders.

The relations are more complex, but Telfoch borrows a taste for relatively atypical films such as *A Sonnenreich* and *The Devil and the Deep* which sometimes belies his apparently uncomplicated, uncontented approach. For the layman there is a strong indication to concentrate entirely on these "artistic" films and leave the rest of the bugs off.



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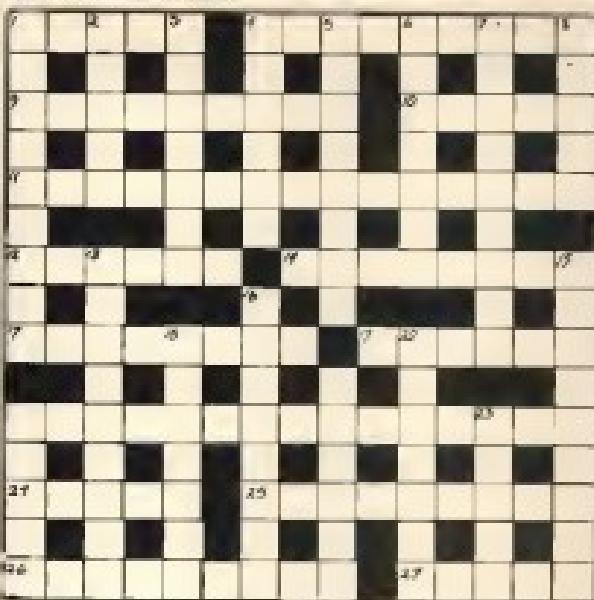
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卷之三

1. Cages in museum. I'm especially interested in (3)

2. Cousins, perhaps - a southern relative endlessly annoying (8)

3. I took short seriously, so that's no problem (9)

4. Place for a doctor? (5)

5. Somewhere, I earth I could live a D-Day, because (7,8)

6. Introduce point in still (6)

7. Alright as functions of geographical exploitation (4,6)

8. One of a different sort of 18, not far away (8)

9. A toller of about 50 could be dangerous. (6)

10. Completely erratic kingdom, might it be said? Herald? (4,5,6)

11. Grassland above twice the number go for a donut (3)

12. Many more round to paved up by the man (9)

13. Blotted progress has had an ultimate (6)

14. Pass attention to composition of 2 (2)

15. Around the remarkable found lion (9)

16. Air of Terpsichore, for example (5)

17. In due all to go round solids, the quarks (7)

18. Quakers can cause lots of alarm (4)

19. Declaration of call for desert, we hear (3,2)

20. Held up song in action (7)

21. Holders for characters, on the sky in a soft Indian (9)

22. Frosted association (5)

23. That the Frenchman and the Scot reach the point where they become islanders (9)

24. Urchin of revolutionary is enough to cause shield cracks

25. Elevate an area here (8)

26. The anger was treated, he became a writer (7)

27. Stock light on round the circle (7)

28. Face up under fishing net in (6)

29. Damaged, but preserved in alcohol, Edward (6)

30. No no a room, I wanted, should be



WELCOME THE BRIGHT WORLD

BY STEPHEN SEWELL

nimrod World Premiere 27th January 1982 nimrod

DIRECTOR: NEIL ARMFIELD

DESIGNER: RAMON O'ARCY

COMPOSER: SARAH DE JONG

CAST: BRANDON BURKE CATHY DOWNES MICHELE FAWDON KATRINA FOSTER MAX GILLIES MARTIN HARRIS

RUSSELL NEWMAN BARRY OTTO



**'With the derricks up above us and the solid earth below,
we're waiting at the lever for the word to let her go.'**

A. B. Paterson

Bingo Paterson penned these lines for a colourful poem over 80 years ago.

At that time, he could hardly have guessed that they would aptly describe the feelings of oilmen now working in a region often frequented by horses.

In an area 600 kilometres west of Rockhampton – known to geologists as the *Gullies Basin* – there's a tiny town called *Isford*.

The local pub is called "Gassy Joe's". The river nearby – the

Bassas – is one in the well known Bingo Paterson tale "A Bush Christmas".

It's close to this town that has such strong associations with Bingo Paterson that Esso and its co-partners are drilling the first test well in one of the largest on-shore oil exploration programs Australia has ever seen.

Together, Esso and its co-partners expect to invest more than \$10,000,000 in the *Gullies Basin* on seismic studies

and a drilling programme.

As with all such exploration programs there is no guarantee of success. Oil, however, is vital to Australia's future, so the search for it – although costly – must continue.



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